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THE DEAR GIRL.

VOLUME III.

THE DEAR GIRL.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON,"
ETC. ETC.

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BALZAC, *Ursule Mirouet*.

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VOLUME III.



LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

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“ My poor friend, you cannot help it. I can make all allowances. You must be on your guard. I do not blame *you* ; but I wish really you would take away these things of yours ; they *are* a little old-fashioned, and if I had listened to advice I should have got everything in your way from my old friend Moisson, at Paris ; but I wished to benefit the place I was living in. No matter now ; we must get on as well as we can.”

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crity, that he should be delighted, and that he was glad she had come to him.

“Don’t think my brother has sent me; he knows nothing of this. You see the state he is in—a sensible, strong-minded man, reduced to a miserable pitiable condition by the heartlessness of a thoughtless girl.”

“This is the old folly,” said Vivian, warmly. “And I am glad you have mentioned it, that we may dispose of it at once and for ever. What is this about heartlessness and cruelty? Put it at the worst, she was a child fresh from school; he a man that might be her father; and even if she *did* change and was a little capricious——”

“I am not come to discuss *that*,” she said, coldly. “That mischief is done—whoever has done it. I want to save something out of the wreck. Tell me this, why do you not end this miserable suspense which is destroying us all? How many months has this been going on? You have won her heart, you will tell me. If you *are* such a devoted

lover, you would have been married to her long ago. But I believe yours is a soldier's, a garrison love, and it is said in this place you are seeking some excuse for retreat."

Margaret's eye was resting on him to see the effect of this speech. He answered her with a burst:

"As I live, no, no, no! And I will say, also, that you, Miss West, do not believe in what you have said. As for the retailed stories of this place, neither Lucy nor I care for them."

"Then why these excuses, why this delay, unless"—and again Margaret's cold eye was on him—"unless the shadow of some old love has risen up and come between? Old pledges are awkward. The gossip of this place sometimes travels far; and if there was danger of such an awkward intrusion during the ceremony——"

He walked about impatiently.

"This is going much too far," he said.
"I have borne your inquisition too long.

Politeness to a lady, and pity for your situation, alone made me bear so much. I must tell you, I do not accept the view of what you call your brother's folly. To me it seems too gentle a name for a cold and sour heart; and if he has sent you here to pry into my affairs, or to question me about them——”

“Or,” said she, suddenly seizing him by the wrist, and turning him to the light, “could it be *that you are bound to one already?* Ah! your face answers me.” One of these mysterious instincts had prompted this random shot.

If a gasping voice, a blanched cheek, and the trembling arm she had clutched were evidence, then she *had* his secret. But the dramatic start of the situation would have scared many a sober man.

“What terms,” she cried, in exultation—“what terms do you make? Or what terms do I give you?—for I can dictate. It is the truth, as I live. You cannot look at me.

You are shaking from head to foot. Ah, this explains all—delay, indecision, mournful looks! You cannot speak to me. You cannot falter out your story. *He* suspects you too!”

He did falter out, “This is a wild speech of yours. Any one can say such a thing. You are as foolish as your brother.”

“Right, right,” said she, pacing backward and forward and speaking to him; “words are nothing. We must have proof—proof and facts. They will come—I shall find them. From this hour I shall watch, hunt, prove; to those who watch and search, proof comes of itself. Now I have something to live for! And now I know there is a good and gracious Being over us all. It was an inspiration sent from heaven. I leave you now.”

Vivian’s manner had of a sudden changed; a sort of desperation was in his face. He crossed over between her and the door. “No; not with this wild story, to be sent

among the scoundrels of this place. Take care ; I shall not have my life and happiness destroyed by a slander sent abroad by a revengeful woman and a rejected rival."

"Fear nothing," she said. "I can wait till the proper time. There shall be no stories, but all facts. I shall watch with delight to see what you will do. You are in a delicious dilemma. Dacres will hold you to your pledge, and not give you ten days more. This is retribution indeed !"

He was so overwhelmed by this torrent of words, that he stood looking at the excited woman unable to murmur a word. At last, as she was turning to go, he said, faintly, "You could not be so base——"

"What, it is true, then?" she said, quickly.

He stamped his foot impatiently. "Leave me. I defy you—both you and him. Do your worst. Only take care what a load of sin will be on your head if you drive me to extremities."

Margaret made no reply, but went down, smiling to herself. When she was in the street, it was then that Lucy, watching anxiously at the window, though unseen herself, saw the unmistakable look of defiance and triumph. Her heart sank; she knew not why, but she had an instinct that it was associated with that darling casket where she had garnered up her treasure.

For the whole of the day that followed she did not see Vivian, and in the evening, when she did—he had come over—he seemed all changed, moody and dejected. He never mentioned the visit that had been paid to him that morning. Harco had gone out to the play—“he wanted a fillip”—so they were alone.

“You have heard some bad news?” said this Dear Girl, not a little disquieted.

“What will you think of me,” he said, “when I tell you that I am very wretched?”

“Why?” said Lucy, her eyes swimming

with sympathy. "Ah ! if you will only tell me !"

"Ah, there, there is the worst," he said, passionately ; "I dare not. My dear sweet Lucy, up to this time we have been both in a dream, a dreadful dream. We do not know what we have been doing. I have been infatuated. We have been hurried on in a course, which may bring ruin and misery on us all."

The alarm and grief in Lucy's face at this strange, unexpected declaration, may be conceived. "Oh ! what does this mean ?" she murmured ; "what have I done ? I know ! They have been turning you against me. Don't listen to *her*. She hates me ; *they* hate me, and would destroy me. Why did you listen to her ? I knew she would set you against me."

The handsome face was softened at once. "If it be a dream, then it is a most delightful one. I could wish I might never awake. Oh, if I could only tell you all. But no one

can understand—and if I had only breathing time——”

“For what?” said Lucy.

“You cannot understand,” he said, sadly. “If I should go away without our being married, you know what would be said. The creatures here would fall on your dear name, and tear you to pieces. And your father? Yet, if you only loved me as I love you, you could trust me—you could believe in me. And as I stand here, the sole motive is one for your sake, and for our happiness; no other in the world.”

Lucy’s face brightened in a moment. “And is that the difficulty? Then why not do so? It will be a dreadful thing for me to lose you; but I trust in you, and *I* love you, and I ask no confidence. I know it is for our common sakes. I shall wait—wait for years, if you wish it; for your life is mine, and your interest mine. The only thing is,” and her face fell—“is papa. He *does* mind so much what people say. And,” she added,

naïvely, "he is so suspicious. But I shall try and bring him over, and I know I shall succeed."

This Dear Girl was so full of confidence, and hope, and trust, that she quite inspired her lover with the same feelings. The air cleared again, the sun came out. The brightest and softest of landscapes lay before them both.

"You are a dear, dear one, indeed," he said. "And, besides, all this difficulty may vanish in a week, a day, an hour; nay, even now I know not what news this day's post may bring us. It is all on the turn of a card."

"And whatever way the card turns," said Lucy, smiling, "I am content. Only tell me *this* much of the secret: has not she, Margaret West, something to do with this?"

His face turned a little pale. "She is a dangerous and a dreadful woman, and, I fear, has found out a way to harass us. But I shall baffle her yet."

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

OUR Lucy, thus wrapped up in the exciting little drama of which she was the heroine little dreamed how tongues outside were still busy with her fair name. The matrons and virgins who disliked her, had grown more than usually virulent—first, because she took the airs of propriety ; and, secondly, because she had an admirer of substance, and had a chance of being established comfortably in the world—unless Providence interfered to show that the admirer was of the common material of the place—dust, ashes, and decay. They flung themselves on her slight figure ;

they tore her with their talons. It was agreed, in many a council, that the late proceeding was the most shocking, and indelicate, and disgraceful, that could be conceived. Need it be added, that in their keeping the story, whatever it was, had lost nothing; nay, had been distorted, daubed over with colours—the reds made to flame, the yellows to blaze, the whites to stare again? It was so serious, indeed, that Mr. Blacker was shocked, and, as public officer of moral health, felt bound to take official notice of it. In this he was all but encouraged by Mrs. Dalrymple, who had grown quite warm in the matter. “A cold, heartless little thing! The effrontery she looks at me, Mr. Blacker, as she passes us, leaning on that man’s arm! She has no heart, I tell you, and she’s killing that foolish West. He has death in his face.”

Lucy, unhappily for herself, contributed to this view; for she really had begun to count Mrs. Dalrymple among her enemies, and

could not restrain her looks of defiance and resentment.

On the very day, then, of Margaret's visit to Vivian, Mr. Blacker put on a white tie of extra stiffness and starch, and set out, on public duty, to call on Mr. Dacres. Lucy was sitting with her father, who was in rather an ill humour. One of his fits of pettish despondency had come upon him. He was wearing away like a rat in a hole. The curse of Swift was upon him. A man of his gifts and genius shut out in this way from his own walk, with a set of wretched fellows picking up his crumbs! Lucy went through the old immemorial formulas, and soothed, and petted, and reassured, with her accustomed earnestness and success. Mr. Blacker entered; and the duty he had come for seemed written in his face. Almost at once he said:

"I want to speak to you a little, in private, Dacres; rather a serious thing."

"What the devil's up now?" said the

agreeable Dacres, his face assuming a spiteful look. "What precious news have you got in your bag, *now*?"

"It is for your private ear, Dacres; so I will ask the young lady, your daughter, to leave us a few moments together. It is really of importance."

"What are you at now?" said Mr. Dacres, scowling at him. "I want no secrets here. I can lend you no money."

Lucy, however, had stolen off to "poor mamma."

"Now speak out, and have done with it."

"The fact is this," said Mr. Blacker; "some—ahem!—rather unpleasant stories have been going about here——"

"Well, you *are* an original fellow! So you come here, laden with the unpleasant stories of the place! Much obliged to you."

"It is rather serious, you see," went on Mr. Blacker, not in the least put out; "and it is right you should know. It seems, your daughter and Mr. Vivian went off on

an expedition to a Fair; and really, what they say—in fact, it is only proper you should contradict the stories, or take action in the matter——”

“And what are the stories, pray?”

“Well, you know, for a young girl to go off with a gentleman, and spend the whole day, and not return till midnight; and, they say, to be seen dancing there——”

“What liars they are!” said Mr. Dacres, warmly. “And you help to propagate this rubbish? *You’re* a charitable minister.”

Before Mr. Blacker could reply, the door opened suddenly, and Vivian entered.

“I beg pardon,” he said, “but I thought Miss Dacres——”

“You are just in time,” said Dacres, taking another turn. “Here’s a charming piece of news, brought in by our friend here. It seems there are stories going about as to that expedition of yours to the Fair. I look to you, my friend, to clear up all this, to the satisfaction of these impudent meddlers,

who go worrying themselves with what don't concern them. Tell this gentleman, were you and she dancing on a common platform there?"

"It is quite false," said Vivian, indignantly; "we left before the dancing began. You were there yourself!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Blacker, surprised. "Mr. Dacres was there? That is quite a different thing."

"Yes, of course it is!" said Dacres. "I suppose a father can take his child for a holiday, without the low broken-down herd of this place being consulted? See here, Mr. Blacker, I don't, at all, take it friendly of you, coming here on such an errand. I don't think it concerned you; and, I tell you what, I don't mean to let the thing rest here. To begin, I must have the name of your authority for these slanders—"

"Oh, really I'm not prepared——"

"Oh, but really, I am, though. I tell you, I shall go round, and make *you* go round,

and contradict this. I say again, who had you all these lies from ?”

“Common rumour, my dear sir—the common gossip of the place.”

“*I can tell you,*” said Vivian, calmly. “There was only one person there who could have sent such stories afloat, and only one person who had a motive in doing so. I have learned enough of him lately, to know that his malignity would stop at nothing.”

“By Jove, Vivian, you’ve hit it,” said Dacres, starting up. “That’s the quarter, sir! A mere creeping fellow, and just like his little spite. I’ll choke him off! What does he mean by vilifying my child? See here, now, Blacker. I expect you—at once—to go round to all the old women, and set this right. And I’ll see you do it, too.”

“Oh, certainly,” said Mr. Blacker, rather alarmed. “It is only right, and proper, and Christian. You may depend on me.”

“O! I know I may,” said Mr. Dacres, grimly.

When Mr. Blacker was gone, Dacres closed the door softly, and looking steadily a moment, said to Vivian :

“ Well ! This is a nice mess, eh ! ”

“ Leave it to me,” said Vivian. “ I shall take a decided course with these Wests.”

Mr. Dacres had been listening, and regarding him very steadily, as he spoke.

“ Very proper and very suitable,” he said. “ But now that brings us to the point. You see what all this comes to, Colonel Vivian. And to what a pass this shilly-shallying has brought us ! I don’t see so much harm in this news of Blacker’s, because the remedy is easy. So now it’s time for me to put a plain question. Vivian, my colonel, what day do we fix for this marriage ? ”

“ I tell you, as I stand here, it is the happiness I am looking forward to, as I am to living out my own life ! ”

“ Oh, of course, I am sure of all that,” said the other, dryly ; “ and the best proof of this, is for you to fix the time.”

“I am helpless, I tell you,” said he, passionately. “If it was to be this very hour, I would willingly agree; but there is one thing which I cannot tell, and which you must not ask me, which must put it off yet. I know it seems strange, but I have spoken to her. *She* knows me, and understands me.”

“Very good,” said Mr. Dacres, slowly. “That will all do very well for her, you know, and all that; but you and I must take a business view of it. Since you don’t fix the day, Colonel Vivian, *I* do. Let me see now. Your *Duchess of Kent* sails on the twenty-third. You will have to leave here on the night of the twentieth, to give yourself a margin for accidents, so on the morning of the twentieth we’ll have our little ceremony, and go away snug by the evening boat. Do you see?”

The other remained silent and stupified.

“That’s all arranged. Or, if you *do* require time, you don’t leave this place, and the *Duchess* must go without you. You

must see, yourself, there can be no trifling in this matter. It has gone too far. You wouldn't like, I know, to be sailing away in your comfortable ship, drinking your duty-free claret below, while my poor little thing is fretting herself out here, with the foul fingers of these scandal-mongers pointed after her. No, no."

Vivian felt that it was not only Dacres who was putting this state of things before him, but his own heart.

"Now see. ^h I don't ask you to say anything," went on Mr. Dacres, "for I know you are a man of the world, and have plenty of sense. Ah! there is Lulu herself, bright as the very morning dew. Ah, my pet, all the world over is busy with your little name."

Lucy, with a little trouble in her face, looked from one to the other. Trials of late seemed to be visiting her life.

"Your amiable friend West," he said, "has been showing his hoof again. But I have news for you, my pet. Papa and Vivian

have been talking over something definite, and have fixed on the day when he's to carry off his little treasure, and poor old Harco is to be left sitting over his empty grate. Yes : the twentieth is the joyful day ; ” and in a low, half-plaintive tone, he began the ecclesiastical refrain :

“ Sing ye the joyful day,
All join in praise ! ”

Lucy looked at Vivian wistfully, but with the light of a secret joy spreading over her face. She saw his face downcast ; his eyes on the ground. She said, hesitatingly, to her father :

“ We must not hurry, Harco dear—we have so many things to think of.”

“ And what do *you* know, pray ? ” said he, turning on her sharply ; “ or have you been settling this between you ? See here, now. I had to speak plainly to our dear colonel a few moments ago, and I must speak plainer still. I don't want to know your secrets or your family affairs ; and what, colonel, you

call the difficulty in this matter. That's your own concern. Get rid of it, or keep it, as you like. God grant you may! But I can't recognize it. Things have gone too far for that; and if we hear more of it, I can only say, it will take a very ugly look, and give rise to ugly suspicions. So now I ask you again, before her, for a plain answer. Will that day which I have fixed as the very latest suit you? Or is it your intention to try and leave this place without fulfilling what you have engaged to do? I say, *to try.*"

Vivian's face worked in emotion. Then he looked over at Lucy's wistful face, in which could be seen plainly interest for him and ready sacrifice of herself. She seemed the Dear Girl indeed at that moment.

Dacres went on as though he had a witness in the box: "There is no compulsion, understand—only it must be decided on the spot, sir. I am constrained to give you the alternative. Accept the day, or sail away! Say yes, and you are a

true man ; say no, or hesitate or shilly-shally, and from this minute you never see or speak to my Lulu again—and after that——”

Distractedly Vivian turned to Lucy, so gentle, loving, sweet, and beautiful, with an air of sorrow which is at the bottom of all interest. That look decided him, and he answered desperately :

“ Yes ; I agree. Yes, on that day be it ! ”

“ There,” said Mr. Dacres, seizing his hand. “ You are a true man and a noble man, and a fine fellow, and have taken a load from our hearts. Now see how these mists are all dispelled as a vapour. I merely go out, see all the old women of both sexes, and tell them the glad day is fixed. Where be their stories then ? where their gibes ? They may paint an inch thick, and welcome. I’ll be off at once. As for that viper West, shall I take him in hand, or you ? ”

“ Leave him to me,” said Vivian, excitedly. “ Don’t be alarmed, Lucy, dearest,

there shall be no quarrelling nor confusion ;
but he must be warned."

Mr. Dacres then went out, leaving the
young ones together. Vivian, for the first
time, took that slight figure in his arms, and
said "Heaven send that no ill may come of
this !"

CHAPTER III.

MARGARET ON THE WATCH.

IN pursuance of this resolve he went straight to West's house on the Place. He sent up word to beg that he might speak with him on private business. The worn and wasted figure came down with fiery and feverish eyes. "What do you want with me?" he said, in a hoarse voice. Vivian thought of Margaret, and said, "Would you come with me down to the Port, or anywhere you please, so that I may say what I have to say to you in private?"

"What can you have to do with me?"

said West. "I do not wish to meet you. It were better for both of us."

"Perhaps it were," said Vivian, with eyes kindling. "But that will scarcely do. I wish to speak in this calm way here, because I do not wish to attract attention."

"What?" said West, eagerly. "You wish me to——You are aggrieved. Is it *that*?"

"Not at all," said the other, calmly; "you shall hear if you come."

West looked at him for some time, went up for his hat, and then they went out together.

When they had got to the end of the Port, and had walked without speaking, Vivian turned round suddenly, and stood in front of him:

"I wish to warn you about the tactics you have hitherto pursued. It is surely scarcely worthy of a gentleman—of a man, to pursue an innocent weak girl with such vindictive weapons, as calumny and slander. You

have failed hitherto, and you have done little mischief—thank Heaven we have had the means of frustrating it, and it must recoil upon your own head.”

“Who has sent you with this story?” said West, passionately. “Is this more of her defiance of me, or does she wish to drive me mad, faster than I am becoming mad, already?”

“She *does* know it, and resents it. I have no wish to argue the thing with you. If you will promise——”

“I shall receive no messages from you or from any one. What do you mean? These dark insinuations will not do for me. You *must* speak out. What has that cruel girl sent you to harass me about?”

“You know well,” said the other, “the wicked, unkind stories you have sent abroad, in a place like this, too, to ruin her—about that little harmless day’s pleasure we had, when you knew her father had come with us——”

“ Oh ! this is the scandal I have sent about —what *she* says I have sent about. But she does not believe it, in her heart. *You* have set her on that ; tell me that.”

“ Then I should tell you what is not true. She has long been convinced, that whatever regard you once had for her has been changed into a morbid hatred that will spare nothing to satisfy itself. She has seen too many proofs of this to doubt it ; and the only excuse she can make for you is, that it may be some weakness or morbid delusion. But whatever *has* happened, I have now come to tell you that this *must* be all changed for the future. I am to be her protector henceforth. A day for our marriage has been fixed.”

The unhappy West, to whom all this speech was a series of stabs, stood listening quite stupefied.

“ Fixed,” went on the other, “ beyond recal. She is to be mine, mine for ever, at all risks ! I brave everything for her ; and

from this moment I stand between her and any breath of annoyance or persecution ! So it is my duty to warn you. As for myself, I shall learn to defy spies of all degrees. Your sister has dared to threaten me. Let her do her worst. For Lucy I have run all risks, and I will go through it to the very end. My game may be as desperate as yours, so take care."

Though he spoke in this defiant way, he all but felt pity for his wretched companion, who, as he looked back, he saw leaning hopelessly against a pillar.

After this scene came a reaction and despondency. Margaret's stern warning was no vain threat. Vivian had a horrid instinct, as he went about, that she was watching his every turn as he and Lucy passed by through the crowd, in the gay Prado. He was conscious of this malignant influence, and the eyes of Margaret and her brother seemed to follow him wherever they went. The indignant heart of our little Lucy

swelled, as she thought of this base treatment. "He does indeed hate me; but I could not have believed that he would have stooped so low and to such means. It is God who has saved me from such a man." Even when Vivian was hurrying along by himself, making for the Port, whither he now often anxiously repaired, he was sure to encounter her eye fixed on him boldly and steadily, and with the same triumphant proclamation, "I hold you in my power. I am watching, and can give you full line; but at any moment——"

CHAPTER IV.

THE "WHITE" SCANDAL.

MEANTIME, Doctor White had obtained all the honour of the cure.

"Wonderful man!" says Mr. Blacker. "See how he brought round Colonel Vivian. Lady Pilpay swears by him. Poor Macan is quite passé—taken to the bottle, I'm told. Most discreditable, really, a man at his time of life. I know how it will be; they'll be coming on the residents—a franc here, and five francs there. I hinted plainly to him yesterday he must not expect me to be taking the hat round."

Mr. Blacker, indeed, never did such a thing, save for ladies who had charms and good birth—"interesting cases," in short, already taken up by Lady M'Callum and people of *that kind*. But with more unattractive cases, and for "a drivelling cognac-swilling old Irishman," it was too unreasonable.

The case, indeed, of the unfortunate man was growing piteous, or rather the case of his unhappy family. His language about Mr. White was simply awful, and his designs seemed murderous. He sometimes came to Mr. Dacres, or to Lulu rather, who deeply commiserated his hapless state. There he would sit and tell his wrongs to her, evoking the deepest sympathy: these Lucy retold to Vivian, whose repulsion to what he thought the low obsequious manner of the rival physician, seemed to increase,—perhaps because he saw how *she* felt.

One afternoon, a short time after the incident of the fair—and one may be pardoned

in them, as, in a little place like this, they assume the most surprising proportions, and have an influence quite equal to superior causes—Mr. Vivian had grown very strong, and was walking out. For the women of the household this was, indeed, a great interest; and the tender solicitude, and even pride, of Madam Jaques was pleasant to see. He was going to the pier to meet "the dear girl," as a little surprise, and had gone away a street or two, when he found he had forgotten gloves, or some other article of dress, and returned. Madam Jaques was at the back, in the garden, with her new maid, and did not see him return. His bedroom opened off his sitting-room, and inside of the bedroom was a little cupboard where he kept some of his "things." He was looking about softly here, with the doors open, and found what he wanted, when, on lifting his head, he saw that some one was in the sitting-room, and must have just come in. This figure was stooped down

over the table, and seemed like that of the doctor, and appeared to be reading. Looking again, and still making no noise, he saw now that it *was* the doctor. "Always coming here," he said to himself, angrily. "I am sure I gave him a strong hint the last time, which any other man would have taken. I shall have no more scruples now." And he walked out boldly.

There was a start and clatter as of shutting down a lid,—the doctor's pale face was fixed on him, and the doctor's trembling fingers were on a little desk of Vivian's, not having time to get away. Vivian saw it all now. He remained a moment looking at him from head to foot.

"This is charming work," said Vivian at last. "Fortunately I came in time. Leave the room—leave this house, never dare to enter it again!"

The other had recovered himself.

"And why, pray? This is very singular language, Colonel Vivian."

"Because you are a thie——No matter—leave at once, and be thankful you are let off so easily."

"Why, I ask again—I have a right to ask. Because I suppose—ah! I see *now*. But you surely cannot think *that*—I wouldn't let such a notion near me. It would be insulting of you."

Vivian lost all patience.

"This effrontery is beyond all. Take care that I do not expose you. It is my duty to put honest people on their guard."

The other turned on him quickly. The obsequious humble insinuation had all gone. Instead there was a dark wicked-looking face.

"Then *you* had better take care—and let there be no misunderstanding about this. I give you a plain warning. I am not to be trifled with, nor my character either. So be very cautious. I tell you you are mistaken in what you think. I am curious in little

cabinets—there seems something curious about that lock."

Vivian laughed scornfully and loudly.

"This is really like the impudence of a thief in the dock."

"No matter what it is like," said the other, taking his hat. "Keep my caution in mind. It will do you no harm. Otherwise, take care. Any man that calumniates me, I know how to calumniate him, and hope to do it better too!"

He left Vivian in a perfect rage. Then said Vivian, who had much of the arrogance *de militaire*, flattered and paid homage to by every one—

"Does he take me for a fool or a coward, and to attempt to brazen it out in that way? He is a common swindler."

He met Lucy tripping home on her father's arm, perhaps missing him. He was full of this strange scene, and told her all that had happened. She listened eagerly, and was not in the least surprised. She always

knew that he was some dreadful being, and expected something of the kind would happen, "and I am *so* glad for one reason: you will *now* have that poor Doctor Macan, who is in the most wretched way—and his wife and children are in a miserable state—and he is coming up to see us this afternoon."

Harco said he was astonished at nothing. Any man that had sat under a witness-box saw plenty of that sort of thing. My dear fellow, there are shabby boys enough on our circuit: and I should not like to leave change for a sovereign on the chimney piece, *in sixpences, you understand*. Black sheep everywhere, sir. Why, bless your heart! no man can stand temptation in his own line. And look here, Vivian, my boy," he added, imperiously; "secure a *fellow from detection*, and I would not trust the chief justice himself, nor the attorney-general, nor one of the whole kit. Fear of detection, that's the only check, sir."

Vivian was tolerably accustomed to this low estimate of humanity. He merely said: "It has really shocked me, even in this place; but there is no need to mention it, at least till I see what we ought to do."

"No, of course not," said Harco. "It's always awkward. Always, my dear fellow, have your washing done, privately, down in the coalhole or the back yard!"

With which ingenious variation of a well-known maxim, Mr. Dacres went his way, singing, that

Her bosom it glows
Like the tint of the rose,
When morning bedews it with blushes.

CHAPTER V.

DR. WHITE GAINS AN ALLY.

DOCTOR MACAN, when he arrived, was detained to dinner at Lucy's earnest request; his "hungry look," she said, appealing to her so piteously. A nice observer would have said, his *thirsty* look. Mr. Dacres was in great spirits; he had got a present that day of what he called "nectar divine"—"some rich oily stuff distilled, my boy, from the bogs—and racy of the soil." Partaking of their native spirit, Doctor Macan forgot all his sorrows, and was at first mournful over himself, and

almost religious in his allusions to the trials Heaven chose to send him. But later, at the third tumbler, he grew more inflamed, and fell furiously on "that ruffian White," whom, please God, he would expose before he died. White was a snake—a mean, crawling, pitiful snake—whom, if he had there,—on the chair he was pointing to with a trembling spoon,—he'd give a good account of in ten minutes.

"By the way," said Harco, gaily, "you heard the news. My! I knew I had something to tell you. Sure, Vivian ran in, caught him at his desk—he had forced the lock, and was bagging the Napoleons, only he came in just in time.—

"No!" cried Doctor Macan, joyfully. "The Lord, in his mercy, be praised! Then my poor orphans, they'll be righted yet."

"Hush! I say, though," said Harco, recollecting. "I believe it is all private, you know. Not a word, you see, mind!"

"Indeed, and I'll have no such thing,"

said Doctor Macan, with great scorn—"no such thing, sir. I'll have no part in hushing up a *sky-andalous* thing of that sort. Don't come to me for that, sir!"

Happily Lucy was away, and did not hear of this indiscreet revelation. Before that night Captain Filby knew it; in the morning Mr. Blacker knew it, and half the colony. He was already closeted with Mrs. Dalrymple; and a sensitive patient of some consideration, who was "under Doctor White's care," greatly shocked, sent off directly for Doctor Macan.

Such of us as have lived in a little settlement like this colony, or at an English hamlet, Richmond, Twickenham, or the like, will understand the sensation produced by a revelation of this kind. "Getting," as Harco would say, "among all the old women of the place," it is magnified, tortured, and twisted. Twenty councils sit together on it, a hundred times in the day. The jury of matrons, so seldom called on for

their services in their appointed legal way, and for legitimate functions, then indeed sit in the box, *en permanence*. Then does the clergyman—with the elderly resident, *vir pietate gravis* and the doctors, consult, and sometimes go from house to house to get signatures. There is a persecution worthy of the Star Chamber—moral thumb-screwing, with, perhaps, final expulsion from the parish, under threat of calling in bishops, or calling a meeting. So it was at Dieppe, only here, at once two parties declared themselves. The doctor was a very agreeable young man, and had many friends, among the ladies. There had been a languor up to this time. No one had recently “gone off,” letting the French shopkeepers “in” for six months’ support; no man of elegant manners—a Count de la Tour—captivating a maiden lady who had four hundred pounds a-year, introduced by Mr. Blacker, “really, now, a man *you should know*—one of the best families,” had suddenly been

discovered to be a courier, as we all recollect, happened but two years ago. Poor Miss Minchin (whose thin pink nose, Captain Filby said coarsely, "you could open oysters with!") was the name of the victim. At once this *affaire* of the doctor was pounced on.

Vivian was greatly annoyed at being "dragged" into such a business. Lucy was deeply concerned for her father's share in the matter, and begged pardon of the colonel with such penitence that he was very near gliding into a repetition of the scene that had taken place before. But with Mr. Dacres he remonstrated gravely:

"I would have submitted to *any* loss rather than such publicity. You know, you said yourself such things should be kept quiet; washing *en famille*, you even quoted."

"My good sir," said Harco, not in the least displeased; "don't tie me down in that way. There you are, the English all over,

chapter and verse. You said so and so three weeks ago, and what do you say now, to-day? 'Pon my soul, it repels me. It's the schoolmaster again. And on our own circuit, there were fellows of that sort—went in a groove from the beginning of a case to the end, while I, sir, shifted and changed my hand fifty times, as the case called for it. My God, sir, I'd no more be bound by the leg in that way, than I'd fly. My way was to fizz and blaze through a case, now right, now left, like a rocket."

Mr. Blacker took a leading part in this unpleasant transaction, as it affected the *moral tone* of the society—a matter on which every one was naturally very strict. Reverend Mr. Penny, Mr. Dick, H.B.M. Consul, held many councils together—Mr. Blacker going express to Mr. Dick, H.B.M. Consul—the latter seen hurrying to Mr. Blacker's, a roll of paper in his hand. A sort of committee was formed,—it was quite safe, every one felt, in *their* hands;

and after some deliberation it was resolved that Lieutenant-Colonel Vivian, H.B.M. Army, should be summoned to Mr. Dick's house to state the transaction formally. Doctor White's party denied the whole transaction in his name, and challenged every investigation.

"Oh, papa," said Lucy, very often, "why did you tell it? Colonel Vivian is wretched about it, and he don't want his name to be dragged into it."

"Why did I do this? why did I do that?" answered Harco, testily; "because I haven't a padlock to my mouth? Because I'm not to be mum as a mouse, at the bidding of any Jack officer. Indeed, I'd like to see any judge on the bench pull me up, in the way my own child does. I don't mean to be cross to you, Lulu, girl, but it's fine times when I used to go hunting witnesses and dragging the very gizzards out of their bodies, to be put to the question by my own girl. Besides, is truth nothing

—is honour nothing? Has White no character to lose? He says the whole is trumped up. Why should any Jack officer filch his good name from him? Oh, my darling!

Her name it was Mary,
And light as a fairy ;
Ah ! give to these arms
Her loveliest charms.
And——

Ahem ! ”

The versatile Harco, it will be seen, *could* change. His change, as ocean served, and was not, as he put it, to be “ caught sitting.”

Mr. Blacker, who had been sent to wait on Lieutenant-Colonel Vivian, to give notice that the committee would be glad to see him for examination “ on Monday morning,” came away rather flushed and put out by his interview. Mr. Blacker reported that he had not been met in the manner he could have wished by Colonel Vivian. Indeed, that officer had treated him rather bluntly,

had spoken very plainly, and with difficulty had been induced to say he would pay "the committee" the respect of attending. Doctor White, the other figure on whom all eyes were concentrated—no one seemed to heed "Macan" much, though he himself affected to consider that it was entirely *his* interest that was at stake—seemed in a state of pleasant indifference, and said he could afford to wait. All in good time. He merely went round and calmly begged of those, who were his *personal* friends, to suspend their judgment. There was something behind the scenes. He did not at all blame Colonel Vivian: that officer had met a severe shock, and he was only recovering from a prostrating illness. He was very glad the committee had taken it up. If *they* had not, he should have insisted on an investigation. To one or two ladies, who admired Doctor White immensely, he put a quiet question. "Is your mind at all affected by this report, this strange delusion on the part of Colonel

Vivian?" Affected! No. They believe him a martyr and confessor.

Mr. West was one of those on whom Doctor White, after some little hesitation, waited in this way. Mr. Blacker and the committee had indeed already visited Mr. West, in the form of a deputation, crowding into his little place, to the alarm of the honest *bonne* of the house. West was an object to both parties, for he was associated with all the weight and respectability of the place. He listened to them indifferently; but when they told him it was Colonel Vivian, who made the charge, "really a man of the highest position, connexion, and all that," his eyes flashed for a moment. "That surely has nothing to do with it, as Mr. Dacres will tell you—in a court of law. Rank or connexion have surely nothing to do with such a matter,—though of course they *have* their weight in some things."

"Oh, of course," said Mr. Blacker, testily, "we understand all that; but surely persons

like you, Mr. West, are for decency, and order, and good name; and really in a society like ours——”

Mr. West laughed. “As you say, in a society like ours, one *can't* be too careful, or too particular.”

“Oh, that is all very well,” said Mr. Penny, “but as a clergyman——”

“As a clergyman,” said Mr. West, bitterly, “you will not condemn the absent. I shall not join in hunting down an unfortunate man on such slender proofs.”

“Oh, but we have Mr. Dacres and the landlady——”

“*I see*,” said West, excitedly, “quite a family party. I understand *now*. I must decline to have anything to do with the business. Leave me, if you please. I decline—I refuse.”

The deputation withdrew. It may be imagined that the slandered doctor soon heard of this generous advocacy, and came forthwith with his soft, low, persecuted

manner. West received him coldly. But Doctor White, who knew human nature, said "he did not want a man like Mr. West to accept or reject any story *he* might tell him. All he asked was, would Mr. West care to listen to a simple statement, which he had not *condescended* to make to any one else? And he would merely ask him confidentially, did he think—*had Colonel Vivian any motive*, either through mistake or otherwise, for making such a cruel charge? Mr. Vivian had taken a dislike to him ever since one morning."

Again Mr. West replied he did not care about the matter—he was not going to interfere.

Just a moment, though. Once he had entered most inadvertently, without any intention or meaning, and had found Miss Dacres there. West started and became attentive.

"Yes!" Dr. White said, eagerly; "and really it was most awkward, as Colonel

Vivian seemed about going down on his knees, and was holding the young lady's hand. They both started—and really it *was* most painful.” But he was innocent in the matter, he said.

“Yes!” said West, now almost frantic in his eagerness; “tell me about that—*all* that—more—as much as you can recollect. Conceal nothing—tell it to me all from the beginning.”

The doctor did so, West drinking in the whole.

“And is not *that* scandalous?” he said, at last. “There are people here that affect to look down on the company, and bring reckless charges against honest people. It is shocking. It must not stop here. *Her* name, though, must not appear; we must save *her*, though she does not deserve it. But for him—a cold, cruel, insolent fellow, wicked too—you must expose *him*. He would not have spared *you*, recollect!”

“Indeed he would not. He has done his best to ruin me.”

“And she, an innocent girl, to join in such a scheme! You must go through with this, Doctor White. It is life and death with *you*. It must be sifted thoroughly, from beginning to the end. *I'll see* to that. It will be a wholesome lesson. *He* is not to come here destroying, ruining all. I shall not stand by and see it. You may count on me, Doctor White!” And he wrung his hand.

Doctor White went away delighted. He knew human nature well.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTOR'S INNOCENCE.

THE doctor had now been sensibly reinforced. This adhesion made a sensible difference in his position. The ladies, who admired him, looked on it as conviction, and settling the matter. Ever since, too, it was known that the colonel's affections had rested on Lucy Dacres, the tide of favour had rather turned against him.

On the day appointed, the "committee" met at Mr. Dick's, H.B.M. consul. To their surprise, Mr. West had announced that he would now join them.

"We must sift it to the very bottom," he said. It was but justice to both parties, and it was their duty as conscientious men. The two gentlemen attended—Colonel Vivian, now quite restored, with an air of indifference, and an offhand manner, which was one of his charming ways—Doctor White calm and composed. Mr. Blacker took the chair. The only one, certainly, who had not judicial calmness was Mr. West, whose wild eyes roved from one to the other.

Mr. Blacker introduced the proceedings with a short speech, saying it was only due to Doctor White and the society to which he belonged—to which they *all* belonged—to have this matter investigated. And he would call on Colonel Vivian—*whom they all knew*, to state—what he was prepared—er—to state.

Colonel Vivian—"whom we all knew"—with a quiet, calm, and most gentlemanly air, began, and said, it was most painful to

him to be concerned in such a matter ; that he came forward with the greatest reluctance, and that he had no feeling whatever to Doctor White, who had attended him patiently——”

Mr. West's cold voice here interrupted. “ We have nothing to do with all this,” he said ; “ it is presumed that you would have no feeling against this gentleman. There is no need to insist on such a thing ; or if it is introduced, Mr. White should surely be heard.”

“ Yes,” said Doctor White, quickly ; “ and I would respectfully ask of Colonel Vivian, if he had not a prejudice against me from my having, on one particular occasion, entered his room without notice, and surprised him when—he was *most* particularly engaged ? ”

The colour came to Vivian's cheek. “ Just what I could have expected from you ! ” he said, angrily, “ How *dare* you ? ”

“ And how particularly engaged ? ” said

Mr. Blacker, his ears quivering with eagerness.

"Shall I tell?" said the doctor, slowly:
"*am* I to tell?"

"You are a scoundrel. I believe everything of you now," said Vivian.

"Hush, hush!" said Mr. Blacker; "this is *most* irregular."

"You hear all this," said the doctor, looking round. "I appeal to every one! Colonel Vivian, I am afraid, is a little hasty and warm-tempered, as we have seen. A man that is so reluctant to have secret passages in his life betrayed, should respect those of another. He need not be afraid. I shall not betray him."

Vivian was actually speechless from indignation.

The doctor went on with triumph. "But Colonel Vivian, I know, is an officer, a soldier, and a man of honour, and will not hesitate to do what is right and just. When he knows he has been mistaken, he will not hesitate to

say so. A gentleman does not suffer by such an amende. I now just put this letter into Colonel Vivian's hand; he will know the writing. I will ask him to take it over with him into that window and peruse it leisurely, and if it does not show him how completely mistaken he has been, let me—never prescribe again."

He went over to Vivian with the letter, and humbly put it into his hand. West and the others marked the start—the paleness—as he looked at the direction.

"Why," he said, "you have not dared!"

"Hush!" said the other, "take it to the window and look it through."

To their surprise, Vivian went over to the window, as he had been directed. He remained some moments, and with his eye fixed on the paper. He seemed stupefied.

After a long interval of silence—the whole seemed very dramatic—Mr. Blacker called out: "Well, Colonel Vivian!"

The latter came back to the table, slowly.

Never was such a change more apparent to West than to the others. He seemed dejected, cowed, crushed. The air de militaire was gone. He spoke slowly and thickly :

“ Doctor White may be correct.”

“ *May* be ? ” repeated the other.

“ *Is* correct,” said Vivian. “ I am afraid I have been under——”

“ *Afraid !* ” again interrupted the doctor ;
“ why really !——”

“ *I was* under a misapprehension,” said Vivian, desperately. “ I withdraw what I said. I see now that I have done him an injustice, and——”

“ I ask no more,” said Dr. White. “ This is sufficient. It is handsome. I hope, however, Colonel Vivian will think this a caution. That the gentlemen here who have so kindly investigated the matter, may not be quite in the dark as to all this, or think there is any mystery, I will now merely ask Colonel Vivian if his suspicions in this unpleasant business did not rest on another

person, whom he sent away out of his establishment?"

"It is quite true," said Vivian.

"Well, I am sure," said Mr. Blacker, "this is most satisfactory to everybody."

So it was to every one but Mr. West, who was for having it all probed to the bottom.

But what an excitement for the colony when the result was known! The doctor cleared—the soldier, who had baffled and deserted the ladies, compromised. It was talked of in a hundred different ways.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVERS.

THERE were some not slow in noticing the marvellous change in Vivian. He seemed dejected and miserable, and a prey to despair and gloom. His fine "Velasquez eyes" roamed about distractedly, and his head seemed to sink down. The first who was to perceive his change was our Lucy. Late that day she had heard the news. She was as excited about it as if it was an event. Her father had come in to her.

"Here's a fine finish! Why, Vivian,

your *inamorato*, it seems, has given in—shown the hoof. I'm sure I don't understand it. I suppose it is all right."

"How, Harco, dear, tell me."

"A juror drawn, it seems; each to pay their own costs. He couldn't go through with it. 'Pon my word, even this queer place is getting queerer, every hour. When an officer in his Majesty's service knuckles down to a mere sawbones, apologises and all that——"

"But *I* understand," said Lucy, with glowing cheeks. "I know what that means. It was his nobleness and generosity. He saw he had been rash, and he would not expose *my* indiscretion and folly."

"Folly! Well, Lulu. Funny child!" and he chaunted:

"When lovely woman stoops to folly——

and all that. Poor, poor Goldy! I'm as like him, as one pea is to another—the same easy carelessness about the francs—

the same pleasant humour. I wish I had the dear old 'Vicar' over here; we read it in youth and in age, and bless the memory of the fellow who knows so well how to reconcile us to human nature. Where could you get a character like Primrose *now*?"

Lulu was not much interested in this point. She had flown away; her heart was full of the grand generosity and nobleness. She got her bonnet on, and fluttered across. Madame Jaques met her with a downcast face.

"Oh, there is bad news, I fear—very bad. Something has happened. You must soothe him. I fear that *belle dame* at Paris——"

Lucy went up, much alarmed. She found Vivian within, in the hopeless way that has been described. He hardly raised his head as she entered. She gave a cry. As we have long since seen, the "dear girl's" heart was his. Already his trouble was

hers. That trouble broke down all restraint, and she had flown up to him; the small face was looking up into his wistfully.

“Tell me—tell me, what is this? What can I do for you? Let me help you. Do!”

He smiled, but it was a very sad smile. He spoke to her with an inexpressible affection and gentleness.

“My dear darling Lucy, something has happened that may change all. A dreadful blow has fallen since morning. It is all my own folly, my own wretchedness, my own *wickedness*, if you like. I cannot explain; I cannot tell you anything. But the best thing now is for me to give up all—everything, and fly to some place where I shall be heard of no more.”

“But I want to hear nothing, and want to know nothing,” said Lucy, soothing him. “I have heard of all your generosity, your nobleness, the way you behaved to that man.”

“Nobleness, indeed!” said Vivian, bit-

CHAPTER VII.

THE LOVERS.

THERE were some not slow in noticing the marvellous change in Vivian. He seemed dejected and miserable, and a prey to despair and gloom. His fine "Velasquez eyes" roamed about distractedly, and his head seemed to sink down. The first who was to perceive his change was our Lucy. Late that day she had heard the news. She was as excited about it as if it was an event. Her father had come in to her.

"Here's a fine finish! Why, Vivian,

your *inamorato*, it seems, has given in—shown the hoof. I'm sure I don't understand it. I suppose it is all right."

"How, Harco, dear, tell me."

"A juror drawn, it seems; each to pay their own costs. He couldn't go through with it. 'Pon my word, even this queer place is getting queerer, every hour. When an officer in his Majesty's service knuckles down to a mere sawbones, apologises and all that——"

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“I have heard of all your generosity, your nobleness, the way you behaved to that man.”

“Nobleness, indeed!” said Vivian, bit-

terly. "Why, he is my master now. I am his slave, if he desires to make me so. Let him; it is the best thing, and I have only deserved it. Why did you come in my way? Why did you not let me go on my own dreary course? I was getting accustomed to it. In time I should have borne it, like other men who have their troubles. Why did that sweet face of yours come before me? Now, what am I to do?"

These words sounded in the ears of the dear girl, far above the choicest music she had ever heard at St. Jacques, or the *établissement*. True, she did not understand; but it was enough for her, that she knew that *she* was the cause of this distraction.

Now that he was *hers*, as she knew—she did not want to know more. If she had a suspicion—she had that phantom—of the girl up in Paris, of whom she had often thought and dreamed, the poor deserted school girl,

whom he could not love, and whom, therefore, in her heart she so pitied.

“What will you think of me?” went on Vivian, in the same way. “No, no! keep away from me! It was cruel, wicked of me! There is one course, indeed, open—the only honourable, upright one—and it is not too late. To fly from this place.”

The dear girl started back. “Ah!” she said, “you could not ask *that*! Poor Harco——”

“Darling!” he said, “I love you too well for that! No, I mean to fly, myself—to give you up for ever—never to see you more. Never!”

“Oh!” And Lucy gave a cry.

“Never to see you more; never to see that gentle face; never hear that sweet voice—that confiding look of yours, Lucy, which has been my ruin, though that is no reason it should be yours, as well as my own ——”

“What would you have me do?” said Lucy, innocently. “I believe in you from my heart, I do. I trust in you. If you go—Oh! oh!—you will come back, Vivian?” she said, piteously, “*for I do not know how I can live without you!*”

The next moment she was in Vivian’s arms, her small head finding shelter next his breast. He was looking down on her with an inexpressible fondness.

“It is all ended now,” he said, in a low voice. “I shall not leave this place. I shall go through with it, come what may!”

Such a moment is as the time during which Abdallah’s or Selim’s head, in the fairy tale, is in the water—a reign, a whole life goes by.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUCY'S NEW ADMIRER.

THE news of this strange accommodation affected Miss West curiously.

“And *you* accept this story,” she said, half contemptuously. “Oh, my poor Gilbert! a foolish, wicked girl like that can turn you round her finger! What can we expect? Taking money out of a desk! not he! *That* was not what he was looking for.”

West's eyes roamed about the room quickly.

“What, then, was it?” he said.

"See how changed you are," said Margaret. "You, the clever lawyer! and I have to help you to these things. My poor Gilbert, this shows us what folly has been at work."

"Never mind that now," said Gilbert, hurriedly. "That was the *old* story. But what do you mean?"

"Just consider," said Margaret. "Why he found something in that desk which gave him some power over this man. There is some mystery, I am convinced, from the beginning. Look at his dejected air. He can neither go nor stay. Why does he not stay, and marry this girl if he has the power? Depend on it, there is some other girl with whom he has been carrying on the same thing. Depend upon it, he is not what he seems, and that this doctor—not vulgarly stealing money as the dull creatures here suppose—holds that secret. That White is a clever, designing man, and will make it all answer his ends."

Lucy had not had many days of unbounded, exuberant happiness, in her short life, but to *that* one she always looked back as to the brightest and sunniest. She came across to "the den," her little heart bounding out of her. Now he was all hers—now he was *hers* for ever. Harco read it in her face, as she entered—that blooming, blushing, joyful face; just as he said he saw what was passing in the heart of a pretty witness "in the box." He knew she had gone over to Vivian.

"Why, what on earth, poppet—ah, I see, the darling colonel has been coming out. I know the tune. Mio Caro!—Vieni!—

My head reposes on her breast,
 Leave it in the rosy pillow,
 In balmy dreams shall ever rest,
 And never know nor storm nor billow.

Tell its Harco all about it."

Harco was told everything. He was very affectionate in his mood that morning. "I knew he was true—true as steel—true to

the core. I had my doubts, indeed," he added, a little inconsistently, "but now all doubts are passed away—

Not a cloud to stain the glass,
Sip it with each lovely lass,
Printing kisses on her—

Mum! Well, well, many's the day we'll have down at Vivian Hall, or Vivian House, or Abbey, or whatever he calls it."

But the change now in the rehabilitated Doctor White was very remarkable—he seemed to become the rage. He had passed carefully through the ordeal—he had foiled that "stuck up," though good-looking Colonel. With that officer it was noticed, too, that he had appeared to become strangely intimate, taking care to appear with him in public places—even on his arm; and the dejected, hopeless—almost abject air of Vivian could not escape observation. It was brought out even by contrast with the triumphant look of the

Doctor, who seemed to lead him about in charge, as it were, and talked everywhere of "his friend Vivian," and of "Vivian," or of "the Colonel!" The colony watched and enjoyed. The Doctor was very clever, they said, and had intimidated that "stuck up" Colonel.

After her first delight, Lucy could not fail to see this state of things, and felt it deeply, and grew almost as dispirited as her lover. But her tact soon helped her to what she thought the true state of things. It flashed on her that the Doctor had never forgiven Vivian for what he had done—those low creatures, as her father often told her, were like toads, "ugly and venomous," and *without* any jewels in their heads. A brilliant idea occurred to her. She had noted that Doctor White was very observant and deferential to *her*—no doubt out of gratitude for that profitable "job" she had put in his way, and for giving him the preference, instead of that poor Macan.

Everybody was so kind to her—every one whom she laid herself out to please, was invariably *so* pleased—almost as a matter of course—that she determined she would try *that*.

We know what a little treasury of airs and graces young girls of her sort carry about with them, and where they *do* lay themselves out for any attempt of this sort, how thoroughly they go about their bewitching design. They rather overdo it. And Doctor White, perhaps to his surprise, found himself, of a sudden, heaped with attentions, and the object of many little *agaceries* and airs. Harco not always attentive to his child's doings, remarked it, and said :

“The witch is at something. I bet you she wants to touch up our gallant Colonel, to quicken her hold over the way.”

The effect on Doctor White was a little curious. As Mr. Dacres might have told Lucy; “our natives can't stand en-

couragement ;” we may suppose, according to the old proverb of mounting mendicancy. There is no easy, genteel riding with them, it must be all wild galloping. Agreeable a young man as was Doctor White, he was “vulgar-minded,” as Mrs. Dalrymple had begun to find out, and when our Lucy made him a present of that charming little nag he proved himself a regular “beggar,” and rode it like a snob, as he was.

In a week she had regretted this encouragement. Her scheme had indeed succeeded, in a sense, for it released Vivian ; but he began to be too assiduous to the lady whom Vivian loved. He was always coming in—Vivian found him again and again sitting in the little drawing-room—Lucy half provoked, half-amazed, but feeling that all she went through, was consecrated, as it were, by the sense of a purer mission. Her look at him, imploring, seemed to be the only restraint ; and Vivian would sit on there—desponding, sus-

picious, fretful—looking from her to Doctor White.

The manner of the Doctor to him had altered, but he retained the same air of influence and authority.

“Colonel Vivian always comes in now; I think he watches from his window over the way, and when he sees me arrive, comes down himself. I don’t like it. It’s not fair. I tell you what, I shall have to go over myself, and give Colonel Vivian a special hearing, as it is called. My little flirtation—my little harmless flirtation—with Miss Lucy must not be interfered with. So when you next see me from your window, I beg, Colonel Vivian, that *you will remain where you are.*”

He laughed. Yet neither Vivian nor Lucy smiled. There was an emphasis in what he said—there was no mistaking. And though Vivian started, and seemed inclined to make a protest, the next moment he had restrained himself. All this caused

not a little wonder to Lucy, and even distress; but she set it down to quite another cause. This noble Vivian—so delicate minded, so high souled and sensitive—infinately repented of the injury he had been so near doing to this professional, and thus in this way made it up to him, as it were. And had she not her *amende*? For was it not through her thoughtless little chatter that the rumour had got abroad? She was beginning not to like the growing *empressement* of the Doctor, which disturbed her; but she was certain now things would soon come to a direct issue. And, indeed, Doctor White had said he had great hopes of getting away soon from the place, as Lady Pilpay had been ordered to travel, and had written to say that if she did, she would certainly take him as her medical adviser.

What, indeed, troubled her far more, was what he informed her of one day, that he was at the Wests' constantly, and that nothing

could exceed Miss West's kindness to him.

"She wished me to attend her brother, to come every day; but I can do *him* no good,—*his* case is beyond me."

Lucy coloured. "And do you go?"

"Yes," he said, "but I cannot minister to the mind—I cannot cure the heart. How can I, when I shall not be able to cure *myself*? I wish I knew *how*."

Lucy's eyes were fixed on him with wonder and curiosity.

"Why—are you ill?" she asked. "We did not know——"

He looked at her significantly.

"No one *shall* know. It is *my* secret."

Lucy partly understood—his manner, at least.

"I have no wish to learn any secrets," she said, rising, "and—I wonder Colonel Vivian has not come."

The Doctor was quite right when he said that Margaret had been very assiduous in

her attentions. She seemed even to pursue him, and, as a matter of course, this pursuit was noticed by the vulgar people of the colony, and interpreted according to the usual rules of the place. She was setting her cap at the good-looking young Doctor. He should have heard Captain Filby on the transaction. "The old girl's getting young. She's trotting after him, upstairs, downstairs, and I've no doubt, sir, in my lady's chamber, too. Ha, ha! We all love a pretty doctor under the rose, under the rose, as I heard Braham sing."

Mr. West grew peevish. "I wish you would leave me in peace," he said to her; I want no doctors, and don't want *that* man above all. He can do me no good."

But still, Miss West pursued him, and wrote to him, and had him at the house, and walked with him—to the infinite amusement of the crowd. No one, indeed, would know the Margaret West of a year back; the cold, indifferent woman,

that seemed to live on her brother alone. Now she lived for that brother still, but she was eager, active, interested, and her eyes had a strange restlessness. She was ever in motion—watching, as it were—eager to let nothing pass, to lose no point, for it might bring her what she had so long sought. The Doctor was seen smiling consciously, but was very tolerant of these attentions, being “a shrewd young man, with an eye to the main chance,” having the world for his oyster, and obliged to accept whatever came to hand for an oyster opener. The Wests, it was known, had interest at home. She could put him in for a good thing.

Yet, had the gossips been able to see into the rooms in the place, they would not have noted much interest or regard in her bearing, as she paced about, and started impatiently after one of the Doctor's visits. “He is playing a game,” they would have heard her say, “a deep game. He has

some wretched money end in view. Yet I could give him more than they could for his secret. He has that man in his power, but he *shall* transfer it to me, or he must look out for himself."

Looking down gloomily into the deserted Place. Evening was drawing on—this cold, steel grey, bluish, Dieppe evening, which settled down in folds on many a weary breast. Constance was in her room. There was a suspicion and coldness growing up between the two women. Margaret found that Dieppe evening congenial to the thoughts she entertained. That evening West came from his "Den," where he had been shut up the whole afternoon, and without speaking, stood beside her, looking out at the blank desertion of the square. It seemed like the lonely, unswept desertion of the stage of one of the great theatres, of an afternoon. The sight affected both in the same way.

"I daresay," said he at last, "such a

place looks very much like this, about this time. Margaret, that man must not come here any more. He frets me—his presence is insupportable, and he can do no good.”

“But he *may*,” said Margaret, excitedly. “You don’t know—you can’t guess. He may help the dearest wishes of your heart. I implore you, Gilbert, do not interfere with me in this.”

He did not answer. He was looking out eagerly. A solitary figure wrapped in a dark and flowing cloak—those garments were in fashion then—was standing in the Place looking round—a solitary figure. His face was turned towards them.

“I know that face,” said West, languidly; “I have seen it somewhere.” At another time, he would have been impetuous and eager in his recognition. “I remember, now!—Ah, yes! That English Doctor, with whom I travelled *then*——”

Yet the figure had an interest for him. He was so associated with that

delightful holiday, that season of joy and happiness. By such association, do objects fall under a golden light and become sanctified. He turned abruptly, and went down. The figure was still standing, much as that statue of the Sea-Captain would be standing there, later. Margaret saw Gilbert go across to him—then saw both shake hands. Then both came into the house.

It was Doctor Adams—"Adams on Idiocy"—whom he had met going to Sir John's, hearty and genial as ever, but with an air of mystery.

"I came this morning by the diligence," he said, "after an awful journey, and have to go back again, by the diligence to-night.

"By yourself?" said Margaret, quickly.

She was so suspicious of everything, and determined never to lose anything, by not putting a question.

"I suppose I shall have company in the

diligence," he said, smiling. "That would not pay M. Lafitte. I have business on this road. But you are not looking well, West! God bless us! what have you been doing to yourself?"

"He has not been well," said Margaret for him. "Things have happened—family matters——"

"I understand," said the other, "still doctors can do harm. You must consult me, when I come through again, which will be soon." And he looked at his watch. "By the way, I was near forgetting to ask—I saw a man here—you—I hope you don't have that apothecary I saw come out of this house, a few minutes ago?"

"Who?" said West, absently.

"O, that fellow—I forget his name—but he don't know his business."

"Who do you mean by an apothecary?" said Margaret, her eyes beginning to be restless.

"I know this is a queer place, saving your presence," said the Doctor, "and all sorts gather here. A regular Botany Bay! But, White—ah! that was the name. And so he got safe here?"

Margaret was beginning to understand.

"*Doctor White*, he calls himself," she said. "He is considered the first physician here."

"O, that *is* good," said he, in a roar. "Clever lad, he was thought. Why, my dear ma'am, he is no more a doctor than that fellow, Poisson, who wrote on the *Cervelle*. He's from Bristol—my own town. His master is one of the best and most respectable chemists in the place. There was some awkwardness about the daughter and our friend here; and then something about the till. But one fine morning our apprentice was gone. O, he was clever! I noticed that—and good-looking, too. If I had time we would have some fun looking into this.

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But in a place like this it would be endless. We all admired the fellow for his cleverness."

"I daresay there is a mistake," said West, eagerly, "for he was accused unjustly already. A person who is here—a Colonel *Vivian*, whom perhaps you have heard of—"

The Doctor gave a slight start. "What! O yes!—I know the name," he said.

Nothing escaped Margaret—even this new air of interest.

He went on, with growing excitement, "*he* made a false and cruel charge against him. But when he was called on to prove it, as became a loyal honest man and a soldier, he shrank from it. Wherever you go, and as you *do* know the name, recollect that, and tell it! It is not creditable to him, at all."

The Doctor looked at him searchingly, then took his wrist. "My good friend," he said, "this won't do. You are feverish, as it is. You should be in your bed. Let me tell

you these are ticklish times. The cholera is on its road. It's at Orleans already, and moving on steadily. Every one should look to themselves."

"I only tell you the truth," said West, wildly, "and whenever you hear that man's name, repeat that: that he charged an honest man with stealing from him, and then skulked out of it."

"You assume that I know this colonel," said the other. "I never meddle in what don't concern me. It only brings one into scrapes. Bless me! I haven't much time. I have to dine at the hotel, and arrange some little matters. Well, I must go; and am glad to have seen you. But take my advice. Everyone should keep one's-self calm—the blood cool—the nerves tranquil—it's his only chance. I assure you I am serious. The cholera will look in here. This place exactly suits him—no drainage, and all that. And you must take care. You needn't mention anything of what I have

said, or, indeed, that I have been in Dieppe at all."

This pleasant physician went off, carefully putting his cloak about him, and wrapping it about his face. West went back indifferently to his room. Not so Margaret. Her eyes began to flash—she got her bonnet, late as it was, wrapped her shawl about her.

"Now," she said, aloud, "Doctor White, you will be persuaded—you will have to *transfer your secret to me!*"

Turning now to Vivian's landlady, the attractive Madame Jaques, her fortunes, like those of so many in this little history, were not brightening. Things were going astray with them, in spite even of Vivian's "superb" Bayard-like behaviour as to the rent. House-keeping, no more than hotel-keeping, is not to be done successfully without training. Jaques, the honest fellow, worked hard; but it was not of much profit. There was another blessing, or anxiety it

might be, shortly to be looked for, which made our little madame proud; but which was certain to add to their other responsibilities. Alas! too, the landlord had served notice, he must raise their rent again! Houses were growing more valuable every hour. These little trials, and much more, she would rehearse piteously to Margaret, whose look assumed sympathy as well as it could. "And now," added little Madame Jaques, standing in the drawing-room—"now, Mademoiselle Vaist, now, when I tell this news to Jaques, which I thought would have ravished him, he looks down gloomily and pensive. Mon Dieu, what will become of us!"

This did not affect Margaret much: her mind had travelled away to a greater purpose. Madame Jaques was an incurable, but a pretty and engaging little gossip. Margaret had only to touch a spring, and she was telling fluently of the splendid creature, Vivian. He was so depressed, so

low in his mind, madame quite felt for him. There he sits, with his eyes on the ground in a reverie. And "oh, mon Dieu! the letters, so many, *so large—that size*," she added, holding her hands apart. "And I declare I quite dread them, Mademoiselle."

"Why, why?" said Margaret, eagerly.

"He is so depressed, Mademoiselle, after they arrive, especially, do you know," added little Madame, looking round with an air of cozy mystery, "especially after the Paris mail comes in. Now you know, Mademoiselle Vaist, if it was after news from his *own* country, we could understand it would be in the order of nature. But from Paris it is so curious, *si intéressant*," added the little madame, laughing.

The keen eyes of Margaret were upon her. She was at her desk at an interrupted letter. "What do you mean?" she said, coldly.

"Oh, I suspect, do you know," she went on, with a little pride. "He is so hand-

some, so graceful, so charming—few girls, indeed—and I dare say up in Paris yonder, where he would, of course, be fêted and admired—what more natural—some charming girl has given him her whole heart.”

“Whom he has deceived and abandoned!” said Margaret, fiercely. “Nothing more likely!”

“No, no, I assure you, no, Mademoiselle,” said Madame, covertly. “They would follow *him*. He cannot help it, he is so handsome, so graceful.”

So she went on. Margaret was not listening: her pen still in her hand, she was following out some thought eagerly; her eyes were travelling away. Suddenly she interrupted the little lady's admiring raptures.

“You are going to the post now. Will you take this letter, and ask if there are any for us? We have no reason to long for the post; but no matter. Indeed, if

you could call as often as you can, and bring us whatever letters came."

Madame was delighted.

In a quarter of an hour she was back again, triumphant, and out of breath. She was holding up the mail.

"What did I tell you, Mademoiselle? Was I not right? O mon Dieu! They come in thousands, all like this, large as a placard; and," added she, dropping her voice, "this is the Paris mail—just what I said. Oh, he gets letters of this pattern very, *very* often."

She held up one in an official shape of cover, on blue tissue paper, and directed in blue ink, with a little printed label in the corner. Margaret's eyes settled on it abruptly; then she suddenly snatched it from her. Madame was a little startled. Margaret scrutinized it carefully and eagerly, and then gave it back to her.

"It is some tradesman's circular," she said, smiling.

After that Madame noticed a restlessness in Margaret, and eagerness for her to be gone. She described her to Jaques, the "bon homme," as brusque and rough. She did not like her.

"When I told her, Jaques, how happy the bon Dieu was about to make you soon, she did not embrace me as that sweet child opposite did. You might have thought I had told her I was going for a walk."

But when our little madame was outside the door, Margaret had rushed from her chair, had flown for her bonnet, and went out. With her lips she was repeating to herself the words on the label—"Maison Favre! Maison Favre! Who will tell me who knows it?" she thought. "Paris is such a world; and in a school like *that* there are so many! I hold him now; I have him *now*," she thought. "Another school-girl—a fine pursuit for a man of his kind! I should have torn it open and read it. He has done us more injury than *that*."

As she posted along, she met Dr. Macan, the deposed physician, grown very decayed now. The other doctor had made tremendous way since. Indeed, poor "Mac" had grown to be a serious bore, and every one "fought shy of him," if they could. As Captain Filby said, "in the man's hungry grin you could see, 'Lend me a five-franc piece.'" He dwelt at inordinate length on his wrongs. Margaret was about passing him, but she stopped suddenly.

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"No, indeed, Dr. Macan. I was just going to send to you. My poor brother is in a very poor way, indeed. His health is

so bad, and he is so changed. Come in the morning."

The doctor looked pleased. "I will, ma'am, the first thing. You may depend on me. You were asking—I'll tell you who knows all about that, and has all the almanacs and registers and lists—every school in the kingdom, man. The maire, ma'am—as good as ever walked—as good as the mayor of Cork, any day. *I'll* make it out for you, if you give it to me on a slip of paper. Very well, ma'am. 'Maison Favre.' So be it. All right. I'll send it up, never fear; and to-morrow. My dear West, God save the queen! What hour shall we say, ma'am, to make all sure?"

That night, as Miss West was sitting dismally with her brother, Dr. Macan's "bonne" came up with a note. It ran:

"Maison Favre isn't a school at all. At the corner I met my brother, of the French faculty, and, by very good luck, thought of asking him. 'Favre, a Maison de Santé.

He's well known in the profession—I mean their French one. ‘Favre sur la Cerveille,’ he tells me, is a great book. I never heard of it. But do nothing hastily, my dear Miss West. Don’t trust these French. I could tell you a much better house near Cork.”

CHAPTER IX.

A SCENE.

THE behaviour of Vivian under this singular treatment was noticed by a few. Sometimes even in the Port it was noticed how boldly Dr. White would come up, and hold his own. The “hang-dog” look of Vivian had already attracted notice. Some asked, with enjoyment, “Wouldn’t it be a good joke if the doctor cut out the colonel?” And Lucy was full of spirits and delight in the coming life that was so soon to open before her, that she rather encouraged these

attentions, and unconsciously fortified this popular view.

But we are now approaching a crisis in this young lady's career.

Lady Pilpay, as was well known, had some time ago left the colony, to pursue her travels; having, it was said, left substantial marks of her regard to the physician who had been of such service to her. She hoped, it was known, to be back at Dieppe in a few months, and at "The Royal," where Le Buff had also given her great satisfaction. People were, indeed, not a little surprised that she had not taken the young physician with her—he was so much in favour with her. Captain Filby had his say on the matter :

"Take to old women as a profession, my boy, and you'll find it pay a sight better than the few beggarly francs you'll pick up here."

Others noted his disappointment with satisfaction; and Lucy, who soon heard of

it, determined to make up to him by redoubled kindness and little attentions.

One evening, about five o'clock, the doctor came in hurriedly; Lucy was alone. "I have just received," he said, "a piece of news which I have come to tell you the very first of all. You recollect Lady Pilpay! She writes to me from Geneva. She has got ill again, and is good enough to say she cannot get well without me—in fact, she offers me the post of her travelling physician."

"Oh, I am so glad," said Lucy; "how fortunate for you."

"No, I don't think it so," said the doctor, fixing his eyes on her. "Quite the contrary."

"Why not?" said she.

"What, to be attached to the train of an old dowager, and consulting her whims and humours, instead of being as I am now, so content—so happy."

"But it is your interest," said Lucy,

innocently. "You must look to that, you know."

"Do *you* look to your interest?" said he with the same curious look which Lucy always found disagreeable. "Do you, when going about with this Colonel Vivian, look to your own interest?"

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"I do not understand," she said. "What . can you mean?"

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“They are quite welcome,” she said. “It is no matter. We have lived here so long.”

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It was wonderful the quickness with which Lucy drew herself up, and her eyes flashed out on him. To touch that noble and magnificent hero of hers, was indeed to touch herself; though, indeed, that was not much of a test, for very often our Lucy might be herself touched, and she did not feel nor care, but where her Harco or her

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“Sir,” said Lucy, rising up.

“Yes, he would deceive you. He is a wretch—a scoundrel. I know his history, and could expose him at any moment. You see how he dreads me—how I can make him crouch before me. He means your ruin.”

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III.

I

“O, help! Vivian—dear Vivian—help me!”

* * * *

Vivian, very dejected in these times; uncertain, moody, carrying about his strange secret; solitary, and yet seeking company to get rid of the dejection that was on his mind. To Lucy his behaviour had grown fitful: he seemed to leave her always as though he found no pleasure in her company: and yet again was presently drawn to her again very shortly. He was on this day wandering abstractedly to the house, after a long battle with himself, and had just gone up the stairs, when the door opened, and Lucy, with flushed cheeks and flashing eye, came flying from the room. He had heard her indignant voice—

“If Colonel Vivian was here, you *dare not*.”

To Vivian she never looked so beautiful. At that moment it came to him, as a revelation, that he was all hers—her life, and her

one thought—in his absence, in his presence. All his doubts passed away in that moment. Again he thought, it was worth “going through all for such a dear girl.” She had flown to his heart, but he had gently put her back, and walked into the room, when he confronted the Doctor, who was pale and red by turns—half crouching and half defiant.

“Take care,” said Dr. White, meaningly, as Vivian advanced to him. Take care what you do to me. Let me pass. No lecturing to me.”

“You *scoundrel*,” said Vivian. This must be all ended this moment. We have borne too much from you.”

“Take care, pray,” said the Doctor. “Don’t talk to me in *this* way; keep back now, or you know what I can do to you, my fine colonel.”

“Do your worst. I say it shall end this moment; you mean, unmanly fellow, this is of a piece with the rest of your acts.”

“No, no,” said Lucy, piteously. “Do not. Let me go down. He may injure you; he tried before.”

“Let him try again. He who believes such a wretch, and his vile stories—you would not.”

“Never,” said Lucy, impetuously; “not if he swore again and again—not if they all swore, and he brought witnesses. I believe you, and you alone.”

She looked up so confidently, so truthfully—that look the young Doctor saw. A malicious smile came on his face.

“A fine admirer,” he said. “You should be proud of him!”

“Leave this room—leave this house,” said Vivian, trembling with rage.

“A time will come,” said he, defiantly, “when you will change this tone, and come begging to me.”

Vivian had advanced on him, had seized him by the collar in a moment, and dragged him to the door. Lucy gave a faint cry, invo-

luntarily, for she was afraid of alarming the house. The Doctor shook himself free. He was pale with rage and a little terror. With a trembling finger he pointed to Vivian—

“Do you know what he is?” he said to Lucy; “that man that you have made your lover. You will never marry him. Do you know what he is?”

There was a pause. Vivian said not a word. Lucy looked at him piteously. An air of exultation came into the Doctor’s face. “A fine lover for you! Why he is——”

“The light of her eyes
It mirrors the skies,
And she’s the best, brightest girl of them all.”

Such was the cheerful interruption. Harco’s voice was on the stairs.

“O not a word to papa,” implored Lucy.

“Go away, Dr. White. Vivian, I conjure you, let not papa see anything, know anything of this wretched business.”

“It will do later. It will keep,” said the Doctor. “He shall apologize to me on his knees *for that insult*, and before you, too, Miss Lucy. These are my terms, my only terms, else to-morrow, morrow morning, as I live——”

“Hallo, Doctor,” said the cheerful Harco, entering, “and Vivian, too. What a little snug council—*concio nabule*—as our Frenchmen would say!”

CHAPTER X.

HE IS COMING.

THE very evening Dr. White had gone from Mr. West's to Lucy Dacres, Margaret remained as we have left her.

On this evening the post had not come in. The Messageries Royal were late. There were no tidings of the malle poste at Sody's, and, as of course, the eagerness of the English became almost frantic. It would have been thought some special and precious despatch, on which hung the life of wife, father, mother, or what was more important to that community, the arrival of a

remittance. The whole community repaired a dozen times to Sody's. The post-office was besieged. Every one at last grew into the delusion that something was denied to them, and that he was most cruelly treated. The only genuine expectant who was waiting the Paris post was Vivian.

The eye of his enemy had been on him as he came and went. But now the whole day had run by, and, in real anxiety, towards eight o'clock he prepared to go up once more to Sody's.

"This," he had said to Lucy, "concerns you too; and who can tell? perhaps this long-expected despatch may set us free from our troubles."

It was quite dark; as he went out after that exciting scene with the doctor. The lamps were being swung up on their strings. The streets were quite deserted. He walked up to Sody's out of the town, and by the gathering and bustle saw, even from afar off, that the long-expected malle poste had come

in. The eager English would have their letters on that day after all, that is, the few English to whom a letter would come. Torches were blazing, lanterns flitting; for the diligence, a little overdue, was also in sight. He had turned away homeward, and was thinking of a little solitary turn down by the pier, always attractive to him, as it was to every man there with such a trouble on his mind.

It was a dull evening, and only a few stragglers, who had been shut up all day in the little dens, and could not "get on" without their walk, came forth wrapped close in macintoshes.

Margaret West was among those stragglers who hung round the Port and saw the daily steamer come in—a gloomy arrival, a few lamps, for it was dark, and a few shadowy figures coming ashore. In this oft-repeated event, when there was not the crowd, the fine evenings, she had come to find a sort of dismal purpose and occupation.

She absently watched the half-dozen passengers who came ashore in a scant procession. But there was one—a bright, quick, black-whiskered face, which she knew, and whose voice, speaking good French to the porters, seemed familiar. She waited till he passed under the lamp, and then remembered it was that doctor who had just left them. To her infinite surprise she now saw that he was joined and greeted heartily, by a figure whom she thought she knew, and whom presently she found to be Vivian. They walked away together, and she heard the doctor order his luggage to be taken to the diligence-office.

Now it came back on her suddenly, that in talking over Dieppe, which the doctor had said he knew better than England, he had never affected to know Colonel Vivian, though they mentioned his name. Her restless mind now settled on this, and she felt a strange curiosity to know the reason of this secrecy.

They were just beside an old open porte cochère, over which hung a dim lamp.

“I was just hurrying to your house,” she heard the doctor say. “I was in Paris yesterday. She was asking to see you, and I have come at once.”

Margaret did not wait to hear more; she was gone in a moment. Even as she did so, Vivian had seen the figure, and turned round uneasily, and even with a misgiving.

West had come home pacing about the room in his usual dismal beat, and with the gentle Constance sitting near. She had long since discovered how hopeless were the common-places of comfort in his case; and that much more soothing would be a mere gentle remark of sympathy. The news of *that* day had wrought on him miserably, and he was only now recovering from the blow, declaiming almost frantically on this new misery.

“How can I stand it?—how can it please me to see her married to him? I should fly

from this place. And yet, if I did, I would only return again. She could not do it—she dare not do it!”

At this moment entered Margaret. She carried one of the little old French argand lamps in her hand, and it lit up her hard face. There was a smile of triumph on it.

“Dont let that disturb you, Gilbert, she said, hurriedly. “It is all over with that. Thank God, our pains and watchings have been rewarded. Let him promise and swear to her as much as he please. You shall see that I am on his track, and I have nearly discovered something. If you would come with me to Paris to-night——”

“To-night!” He started. “Why?”

“Because *he* is going.”

“*He* going, leaving her! I knew he would do it. Thank Heaven, I shall be avenged!”

“Perhaps so. If we are fortunate, he may never return! Ah! I have got on his track.”

He looked at her, wondering and excited. Then his face fell.

“I should not have the heart to do it. I could not sit in a carriage for that long journey. My heart would flutter itself away in impatience. I should be in agonies ; and I am not well. This is fancy, I know ; but I dare not face it. No, no, Margaret ; give up this wild notion ; and,” added he, a little wildly himself, “we must stay and watch her.”

Constance, who had not spoken yet, now interposed, softly yet firmly :

“Gilbert, Gilbert, this is all false ! It is destroying you and us. What are these people to you now ? What can *she* be to you ? Surely, after all these dreadful things that have passed, the old state can never return ? And this watching and following is only perpetuating our wretchedness. Dearest Gilbert, you know how I love and feel and would die for you ; and, oh ! would it not be

best for you to have done with all at once and for ever? It would be a great trial at first, but, in the end, for the best."

Margaret turned on her with scorn and anger. Of late she had noticed this tone of advice in Constance, and had met it with grim and cold opposition.

"So this is *your* advice! I should despise him if he listened to you. It is as foolish, as contemptible, and as unprofitable as your poor weak mind. What claim has it to give advice? You can't see that, if he did go, he would be back here in a week. Don't interfere in these things, I warn you. Keep to your serving and your schooling; above all don't interfere with me. I have his interest more at heart than any one living, and a thing like this cannot be left in this half-way. I was against it, God knows, all along; no one more ridiculed it, more opposed it. I told you, Gilbert, that a child of that sort was sure to give you trials in *that* way, and a bad wicked creature, which my eyes

saw she was. As you would go on, we may at least punish. Listen, Gilbert. You can stay, if you will, but some one *shall* go—and I, if no one else.”

He started, yet did not oppose. There was excitement in all this. It led up to something; it was something to look forward to, which, to the diseased mind, is a relief.

“I have my passion, my humour,” said Margaret, as she hurriedly went about her preparations, which will not let me rest. I must satisfy it. To make retribution overtake that man is what I live for—the man that has destroyed you, Gilbert.”

No one opposed her. There was a grave old French *bonne* who lived with them, and her Margaret determined to take with her.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE TRACK.

AT Sody's, the diligence was just starting, the great Normandies neighing and plunging, mountains of baggage piled on the top, and lanterns flittering about, and presently the two came up. The luggage was up, the driver in his place giving a skilful crack of his whip—a report like a pistol-shot. Heads were looking out of the window, and the conductor had to call to the two gentlemen, who were talking together, “En voiture, messieurs !” At the last moment a lady and her maid came and found places

inside. Then it rolled away on what was then the most terrible and the weariest of all journeys, the most excruciating of purgatories—cramping and sore for the limbs, exhausting, famishing, and perilous. Some found sleep, through that long night of jolting and banging, by the ingenious strap in the roof, on which sore elbows rested, and over which heavy heads nodded. A long night for Margaret! She never nodded, though the old *bonne* did, who had never been further than Hâvre in her whole life. Margaret kept stark and stiff, and wakeful, until the grey morning began to break. She knew he was separated from her but by a panel. The long strange night had passed by—dramatic often, when, on a sudden stop and calm, the weary stupefied passengers would raise their heads from the strap, look out at the flaring lamps dancing about, peer through the little small-paned window, and see an inviting village inn or post-house, with the glimpse of a fire. They would give

worlds for the little snowy chamber, the peace, the calm. But they must go on ; for now comes the sudden drag, the whip-cracking, and the old jolting, jangling, and general misery. Margaret felt no wish to stop ; she was only eager to get forward.

A bright day, but so long and weary ! Gilbert was right ; that tedious imprisonment would have worn his heart out. All that day Margaret's veil was down ; through its thick folds, as she looked from the window on some brief halt, she saw her enemy standing only a foot away, his handsome but anxious face resting on hers with the utmost unconsciousness ; she could actually smile behind its folds. Very often some of the passengers wondered who the veiled lady was : he was too absorbed. That night, very late, they were clattering into Paris—ranging through that old quarter—and their great vehicle rolled through the archway, in the street of Our Lady of Victories, where, to this day, we may see the yellow-battered

Messageries Impériales lying up in ordinary, like old condemned frigates in dock. Here she waited, her veil down, growing yet more excited, and watched the travellers. She and her enemy were under the same roof. It was just midnight. The veiled lady, standing by, saw the two go out. She saw them send for a carriage, go in, and drive away. She was standing by, and heard the direction given to the coachman—"To Auteuil." Then the veiled lady and her maid, besieged by obsequious porters, were put into another carriage, and drove away, also to Auteuil.

That was a long, long drive. Morning was breaking as she neared it, and she saw the hills, and stiff even French country, like a scene in a play. The long road sloped down and rose again for a mile and more, like a narrow ribbon, and at the end of the ribbon she could make out a little black dot, like a beetle—the carriage which held her enemy. A little beyond this place trees began to come more thickly, and a

few châteaux along the roadside; and at one of these her coachman, pulling up sharply, told her the carriage had stopped. She looked out, got down into the road, walked on a little, looked round so as to know the marks again, then bade him drive back to the inn of the place. As the carriage turned round, she saw the two little specs descend and pass in. There was something dramatic in the utter unconsciousness of the pursued.

In the morning she had walked out along that long road. She soon came to the place—an old château, with great white gate, piers, fine old trees, a long avenue, and a great yellow building. It had not the air of nobility now, and seemed like a school. She hesitated before ringing the great bell at the gate, which was flowery and foliated, according to the old handsome pattern.

She suddenly heard steps, and saw a peasant coming home singing, with a fork on his shoulder. She stopped him.

“Could you tell me, my friend, whose is that château house there?”

“Yonder, where the fiacre is? Fichtre! Don’t you know? Pray that you may never be inside of it. It’s Dr. Favre’s maison de santé—the madhouse.”

The other was silent for a moment. “A madhouse!” she repeated.

“Yes—for women. The Sisters of Charity come and look after them. Oh, Dr. Favre is very clever, and has sent away many cured. They send them to him from all parts.”

She had found it; and cried out, actually aloud, but there was no one near to hear, “I have found it! Now we shall see!”

Coming to betimes, she rang the bell; it clanged harshly; and after a long, long time, a strong-built man, blunt but civil, came slowly down the avenue, and asked, through the gate, what madam’s business was. She had arranged her plan in a moment, and said she wished to speak to the principal

about a patient. She was led into a cold, gloomy parlour, and waited.

Dr. Favre's house had a kind of reputation, among physicians, as being in advance of the barbarous treatment—chains, waistcoats, &c.—then in fashion, and was known favourably even to one or two humane English physicians. The Doctor himself, when he came in, seemed kind and benevolent, but scanned her all over with the professional scrutiny with which he “diagnosed” patients.

She had a friend at home whom they were thinking of placing—a dear, dear relation, who would be sure to be kindly used, for whom she would give her life.

Dr. Favre had such a reputation there. The Doctor, a really good man, was enthusiastic about his system, and, above all, pleased with English interest.

“Let me show you our place. I shall be most proud to have your good report when you go back to Great Britain. Fine country! I was there once. A great

people; and I hope to extend my connexion with it. You know Doctor Parkes, a man of great fame in my way? He is here now; rung me up last night, or rather this morning. I thought the patients had organised an émeute."

Margaret asked eagerly, "Has he come about a patient here?"

The Doctor looked at her with sharp eyes. "He is always coming backwards and forwards," he said, coldly. "He has sent me many patients."

Though she had a sort of horror for the dreadful scenes usually to be found in these places, this was the price to be paid for the discovery she had made. She had to spend an hour and a half, with an air of interest, in viewing the whole establishment, patients, &c., and to listen to all the details. The French doctor had the true foriegner respect for the grandeur of England as the land of inexhaustible wealth, and was really anxious to impress the stranger.

Again Margaret tried to get details.

"Now what sort of cases have you here? Have you any sick patients?"

"Oh yes," he said, "now and then. Here are our prospectuses, and here is a little book which gives the principles of our system. And here, on this note-paper, is a picture of the establishment. Well?"

A French sister here entered, and said, in a half-whisper—but Margaret heard—"Macquet—she wishes him to be sent for again."

"Very good, Sœur Rosalie," the doctor said, quickly. "Send for him. Now, madame, you will excuse me? I must go my rounds."

There was a quick intelligence in her eye. She had a few more questions to ask—much about *the system*. This bait he could not resist, for he was an honest enthusiast, and proud of his profession and discoveries.

"But, now, about the sick?" said Margaret, craftily. "You can do nothing with them? For the bodily ailment, combined with the psychological——"

“Can’t I?” said the doctor, triumphantly. “Why, I have here an instance to the contrary. I could show you a case that I have had here for years, whom we thought ill and dying many times. Why, sickness seems to be almost a means of cure for mental illness. The nearer she seemed to her end, the more rational she became. I have a theory, based on this, which will amaze the world one of these days. At this moment she is very ill, and yet has quite, you may say, recovered mentally.”

“And you do not think she will die?” said Margaret, excitedly. “Where is your skill?”

The doctor looked astonished for a moment, then seemed pleased at the rare interest taken in him and his system.

“I wonder,” he said, abstractedly, “would there be any harm in letting you see her? Really I don’t see——”

“Oh, I should so wish it!” said Margaret. At that moment they heard the great bell clang.

“Ah! impossible now,” said the doctor, “In fact, you will excuse me. I have to meet some one.”

“Why, who is this—is this *her husband?*” said Margaret, abruptly.

The doctor started, and looked into her face with wonder and alarm.

“What do you mean?” he said. “What do you know? Ah, I begin to see.”

Margaret hurriedly closed the door, which he had half opened.

“Doctor Favre,” she said, “I *do* know something. And I can guess more. I warn you, be on your guard, or you will be indirectly accessory to a dreadful business. That sick woman whom you have here is his wife—you cannot deny it.”

“I do deny it. I know nothing of the kind. You are talking idly.”

“What, on your honour?”

“On my honour, no!”

“Then he has added to his villanies by wearing a false name. What I warn you is,

that he is about to marry a girl down at Dieppe, and it is his interest that his wife should be out of the world by a certain day."

"Good gracious!" said the doctor. "Have you any proof for all this?"

"It is for this I have travelled so far night and day. I can give you names, dates, everything. I own to you now my story of a relation was all a fiction—except, indeed, that I *have* a dear, dear brother whom this man has cruelly wronged, and all but driven mad. God knows but we may have to come to you for aid yet. Still you shall not lose by what I have taken up of your precious time." And, still speaking very hurriedly, she laid some gold upon the chimneypiece. "I give you this warning," she said. "Guard her carefully. A man in so desperate a situation as he is may be driven on in spite of himself. What," said Margaret, drawing closer, and seizing him by the wrist as she whispered the words—"What if all this *was told to her*

in her present state? That might be the best and most effectual cure in the world, and make your name for you!"

She drew back, and looked at him steadily. The doctor, a gentle quiet man, seemed confounded by the sudden incidents of this latter part of the interview.

"The shock, the surprise," went on Margaret—"we read of these things—has done wonders. Such a rare opportunity for science may never come again. The experiment would be no harm. What if a letter was written and shown to her? You say she is rational now. I would do it, if you wish, for I, too, will stop at nothing to save my unhappy brother, whom these people have destroyed among them. Ah!" said Margaret, raising her voice, and pointing with long finger as the door opened, "*There is the man! Colonel Vivian!*"

Vivian, as he saw this grey and gaunt figure denouncing him, turned ghastly pale, and all but tottered back.

CHAPTER XII.

DESERTION.

FOR Lucy this had all been the opening of a new romance. The grand mystery of the sealed book was from that day laid open to her. She began now to live for a purpose. She often thought over it. She could not shut out the last vision of her hero, so gentle, so gracious, so soft, and noble.

The very night that Vivian had departed so abruptly, it came back on her as a dream. For the first time she began to trouble herself with speculations as to these curious starts she had begun to notice in him. Per-

haps the coming trouble was casting its shadow before. In this state of doubt, a bright face appeared at her door. It was the face of Madame Jaques, radiant and joyous. She almost rushed in; for they felt to each other like two girls.

“Joy! joy!” she cried. “Such news, mademoiselle! He is indeed a hero! Jaques has even stopped his cutting wood, and says we can now enjoy ourselves, and has promised that we shall go to the fair together, that is coming on.”

Lucy dismissed her own sorrows, and sympathised.

“I know,” she said. “He told me. And I am so glad—for you, that is——”

“But the poor beau garçon himself,” she said, clasping her hands. “He will be ill again. There he goes, pacing, pacing, pacing, these two hours. And when he told me that, he looked worn and harassed. Ah, Mademoiselle Lucy. Don’t tell me! I know the way Jaques used to go—precisely the same—pace, pace, pace; furious, like Vel-

cour at the theatre. He could act as well as Velcour."

"But he did not tell you this, Marie? Surely not?" asked Lucy, in a flutter.

"No, no, no; I should not have ventured. But I guess I know." And she closed the door mysteriously. "Jaques and I went through all this—every bit of it. Je tiens le mot. It is in the order. It *must* come in matters of this kind."

"What?" asked Lucy, in amazement. She had great confidence in the wisdom and knowledge of her friend, who had already passed through the fire.

"I could explain all. *There is another, mademoiselle, do you not see? He is bound—bound by his word, bound in honour. There is the struggle!*"

"Ah!" cried Lucy. The light had poured in on her of a sudden.

"Yes, Jaques says so. I say so. Any one that knows anything of these things must say so. A marriage of convenience—his father and mother force him."

“He has no father or mother,” said Lucy, gently taking these lights out of the picture.

“The young lady idolises him ; that is only natural, and no fault of hers. He is a man of honour.” Madame Jaques drew herself up, as she had seen the ladies on the stage do. “He respects his word. He has long since ceased to care for her. He now idolises another.”

This sketch actually brought conviction home to Lucy. It was too clear ; it explained everything. It was a flood of light. All that he had done became not only excusable, but natural, and what he *should* have done. The bright twinklings of relief and happiness sparkled in her eyes. She could not conceal her joy. She was conscious of this, and the blushes again spread in a current all over her cheeks and neck. The expert who had so skilfully treated the case looked on with pride and affection.

Such was the position of things on that unlucky night. That place and its society must have been supermortal not to have had

its whispers and "stories." What did Lucy care? what did Vivian care? He had been quartered in fifty hotbeds of gossip—the garrison towns of the United Kingdom. Lucy was happy—happy as a child when the pantomime transformation scene sets in—and now overflowing with joy, since she had made the comfort of her friend.

These were happy days for Lucy. An unbounded prospect seemed opening out before her of happiness and joy; something elysian seemed to be drawing on. There was a gentleness, an interest, about her lover, an anticipation she could not describe; and all day long she felt she could sing. For the next, a little plan had been fixed. There was a small town about ten miles away, where there were some curious things to be seen—a church—it did not matter what; it was an expedition. She and dear Harco, and perhaps the dearer Vivian, were to walk there, and drive back again. These sort of plans gave her surprising pleasure. Shall it be confessed, also, she was anxious

to show the public, the busy public of the place—the Dempseys, Blackers, Filbys—that she did not care—no, not one *bit*—for their vile uncharitable stories? She and Harcourt and Vivian made up *their* world.

Harco was in great spirits that night; for he had his joyful news also. A letter was in his hand; who shall we suppose was it from? Sir John Trotter, the strange baronet. It expressed great surprise at not having heard from him, as he was “still keeping the borough open.” (“What did I tell you, Lulu? I knew the fellow would knuckle down to me!”) “It was surely worth while making a small exertion for so important a matter,” Sir John then went on, dwelling on this point; adding, “I often wish to have the pleasure of hearing ‘Charlie is my darling’ once more. I never heard it given with such incomparable spirit.”

“He was a good judge of music,” said Harco, reflectively; “I must allow him that. Indeed, I must say he has behaved hand-

somely. For between ourselves, Lulu, I let my tongue fly a little——”

“He is noble, dearest,” said Lucy, with enthusiasm. “Oh, and we shall see you sitting in the house a real M.P. !”

“Hearing me, too, my pet: seeing would be poor stuff. I’ll astonish them, the right honourable gentlemen on my right. And I’ll be giving orders for the gallery to my Lulu, and her colonel—eh, rogue !”

Lulu coloured, not with confusion, but with pleasure. She saw the vision of a happy party driving down to the house—Harco going in at the members’ entrance, she and her dear Vivian at their own proper door. Suddenly Harco called out with one of those odd changes of tone so common to him, now grown surly :

“What the deuce is all this? ‘I expected at least to have heard from your friend, who explained to me how things were, and how you were situated. He said I was to hear from him in a week. This delay is very strange, and I hope will be explained.

Business, however, will take me to France, shortly, and I shall look in at Dieppe on my way.' What the deuce—what does he mean? I've no friend."

Lucy gravely took it from him, and read it over to herself, then returned it to him, her eyes flashing, her lips trembling. "I know it," she said, "and can explain it. It was Mr. West."

"Phe—e—e—w—" went on Mr. Dacres in an interminable whistle. "*That's* the way! so it is."

"And do you not see, Harco? Oh! how mean, how pitiful! Don't you see this *was his revenge*, when he found that I would not accept him? How unworthy! He tries to poison our friends, and set them against us. I could not have believed it of him! No!"

"He's a *blackguard*!" said Harco, with sudden savageness—"a mean, plotting, low fellow. I'll go to him, and tell him so, too. What does he mean, meddling with me?"

"No, you mustn't," said Lucy, firmly; "we will treat him with contempt. Or, I

tell you what, let us send out for Vivian, and tell him. I have a little secret, Harco. *He* knows Sir John; but I did not like telling you, as it was all at an end."

"Well, well," said Harco, "that West—the viper—he beats anything. Yes, let's have over the dear colonel."

Lulu ran off to her room. Mr. Dacres, winking to himself, which he often did, got his hat and tripped off.

"I'll just give him a hearing this very moment," he said. "The old ascetic! my old Mount Tabor, indeed! nice monk of the desert, indeed! Confound his impudence! and infernal shabby too."

He set off, and repaired to the Place, where West's rooms were, and in his jovial and "light-of-her-eyes" style accosted "the little maid" that opened the door. "I want to see the master, my dear. Tell him I'm below."

The girl shook her head, and said, "He is not well at all, sir, I fear, and can see no one."

"Oh, I know, I know. He'll see me, never fear. Shall I go up to his room?"

"Impossible, sir," she said; "he is not up even. He never does that. Indeed, sir, you can't."

"Well, tell his sister, Miss Margaret."

"No, monsieur; you can't see any of them."

"Oh, this won't do at all," said Harco, raising his voice so as to be heard. "This hiding and holing won't answer. I'm not to be put off in this style."

Suddenly a door opened, and he saw West's figure before him—the pale face, but the fiery eyes.

"Come in here," he said, with an air of authority. "I am not well, and see nobody; but I heard what you said. What is it you want?"

"Why, I want this," said Harco, with some bluster. "I came to speak about a piece of your behaviour, Mr. West, which, I must take the liberty of telling you, I think devilish unhandsome, and shabby too."

West stepped back.

"I am not in the humour for this sort of thing," he said, impatiently. "You must go away out of this—to the café—anywhere, if this is all you have come for."

Harco coloured. "What do you mean?" he said. "I won't be put off that way, sir. What's the meaning of this, sir? Look at that. Here's Trotter writing over that he saw you, and gave you messages for me, which you have suppressed and *cushioned*. Yes, sir; and from what I call mean and unworthy motives, which we all know. Now explain it, if you can."

"I explain nothing. I should not condescend to do it. Make what you like of the transaction."

"Oh, come, come," said Mr. Dacres, quite losing his temper, "this won't do at all. I am not accustomed to this style. You must explain—or, by the Lord, sir, as sure as I stand here, I'll go over all this place and *post* you."

"Do it, then, as speedily as you can," said

Mr. West, coldly. "Then you will find that I know how to deal with you. You must leave this house *now*."

"Then let me tell you," said Mr. Dacres, "that your *plot* has failed. Your unmanly plot failed *in toto*. I am astonished at any one, with *the heart* of a man, trying to strike at a poor girl through her father! But there are others to help her and me. Colonel Vivian, sir, is a gentleman and a man of honour. He has taken this Trotter matter in hand."

A curious expression came into Mr. West's face.

"Then I hope that he will be able to help you."

And Mr. West abruptly retired, leaving Harco utterly confounded at the fellow's assurance. "I'll match my fine hermit yet." He turned to the maid who was standing there: "Miss West, please!"

"She has gone away."

"Let me see. Gone away! When? where?"

"To Paris, I believe, sir," said the girl, looking round.

"My God!" said Mr. Dacres, *really* and not theatrically astonished. "Oh, I must see about this." He was going past her, when the figure of Constance appeared on the stairs. She spoke to him coldly, but firmly. Dacres never relished her.

"My brother has passed a very bad night," she said. "Do please go away."

"Oh, of course, of course," he said. "Here's news, though! So Miss Margaret West has taken a trip for herself. Has she gone off with any one?"

"I can tell you nothing," said Constance in the same icy tone. "You can want nothing with her."

"What do I want?" repeated he, thinking what he *did* want. "Oh, a private matter. And what the dev——ahem!—what on the face of God's earth takes her to Paris?"

It was natural he should be thus puzzled at these extraordinary doings, for there were

certain fixed causes by which every disappearance in the colony was to be accounted for—either by death, the collapse of bankruptcy, or the luxury of travel. Miss West was out of all three categories.

He went away, utterly mystified. “But I’ll not be humbugged,” he said, working himself into a rage, “by him, or any like him! I mind the day when I made Coulter eat his words in the bar-room, Q.C. and all! And my Jack over there won’t escape. I’ll have him out on the sands as soon as look at him.”

When he got home he met the pretty Madame Jaques, who had herself come over with a note for Miss Lucy. Mr. Dacres, in good spirits at his last resolve, had met her on the stairs, and received her with the gallantry which he always kept for what he called a fine woman. He could have sung the “Light of her eye, that mirrors the skies,” over her, and called her his “jolie Marie,” which did not at all offend her.

“And how is our handsome colonel?” he

said, gaily, after these compliments. "But what's up, my dear?"

"O mon Dieu, did you not hear, sir? He is gone away to-night."

"*Gone away!*" he repeated, in genuine amazement and anger. "What the deuce do you mean, woman?"

"He went by the diligence. He was obliged to go. He will return, he says, soon."

"Return, he says. Here's a business. The scoundrel! I'll be after him, and drag him back by the neck, the mean hound! Here, Lucy, child, come out here." And, without ceremony, he tore open her letter and read:

"Dearest Lucy,—What will you think of me! At half an hour's notice I have to leave this for Paris. But I shall be back in a week at furthest. What I go for, has something to do with our happiness, and may help to soothe away all difficulties. I shall count the hours till I see you again.

Darling, take care of yourself, and don't be disquieted.

“Yours,

“VIVIAN.”

“Damn his impudence! What does he mean? Isn't this nice?” he called to Lucy, who entered, scared. “Read *that*! The fellow has deserted—fled; but, by the Lord Chancellor, I'll hunt him over the country, and drag him back by the crop.”

Lucy turned pale as she read. It indeed looked like what her father said.

“Oh, he will return,” she said. “I know he will. You see what he says.”

“What do *you* know?” he said, quite savage. “You know enough, indeed. I told you the fellow was at some dodge. And the rubbish about Trotter. But it won't serve him. I'll hunt him through the three kingdoms, and shoot him as I would my dog. We've enough money left to pay for a charge of powder and shot and the hire of a pair of pistols. God help us. Everything seems going finely with us. But

I'll hunt him, never fear. If there's a chaise to be had at Sody's or any of these blackguards, I'll catch him."

This alarming combination of threats and forebodings made the whole seem very serious in Lucy's eyes.

There was not a more gloomy little household that night in the colony; and there were plenty in all conscience.

Our poor Lucy's heart should have been the heaviest. With all her faith and trust in her lover, something seemed to whisper to her that all was not right. That terrible difficulty which was in his path, and which he seemed to hint was all but insurmountable—perhaps it had proved too much, and he had no resource but to fly.

Dismal evening! most mournful of nights! for Mr. Dacres, having found that his resources would not admit of his taking a chaise at Sody's to overtake the diligence, "and bring the blackguard back by the crop," had sunk into a moody state, and over some of the poor liquor of the country

poured out grumblings and frantic threats commingled. On his "Lulu" his chief wrath descended. She was a poor helpless soul, and would be so to the end of the chapter. God help him! To have the ruffians there pointing to him as he walked—that night he would have been at the top of the tree, only for her.

The way he was treated—the mortification, indignities that were in store for him. God help him! It was always the way!

They would have him in a jail among them; and before Heaven he would be happier there!

In this declaration there was some little truth. This temper he expended all on poor Lucy and her mamma.

"Nice kettle of fish you've made of it. Between the two stools you're safe to break the small of your back, and serve you right too. Nice management—charming! I declare I am ashamed to walk in the streets of this hole, with the people pointing after me.

But I'll hunt him yet. I'll not be disgraced. What are you at now? A ball dress, no less. Who is to pay for all this?"

"You know it was *his* present, Harco dear," faltered Lucy.

"And you'd put that on your back! Well, you *have* pride, 'pon my word. You ought to tell 'em all it was he gave it to you. I declare I would."

On the next day, "the report" had got abroad, Captain Filby, as usual, being chief propagator. "I told you so! What do you say to my fine fellow with the smooth face levanting at the last minute? Stole away in the night. Got off gingerly. My dear ma'am, I knew it would come to that. Our friend Harco, as they call him, doesn't improve on a near view. Not exactly the stuff for a father-in-law. Don't bear the microscope exactly. When I heard that bullying about 'fixing the day,' I knew how it would be."

In the general dearth of news this came

very welcome. There was the disappointment and discontent, too, at the previous little scandal being snatched from them. For every one knew how Mr. Dacres had gone round everywhere and announced both his daughter's coming marriage and the fact that her father had been on the little party to the fair. But now people were running joyfully from house to house with the news that the girl had been "deserted." Indeed, this news might have been read in the moody face of Mr. Dacres, who was heard going about muttering and uttering his favourite threat of hunting some one out, and dragging him back "by the crop." "By God, I will, sir," he would say to any one who would "stand" him a glass of liqueur over the little table in the café. "Not but that he says he is coming back to fulfil his engagement; but to do a thing in that underhand way—slip off—I don't understand it at all, sir."

Poor Lucy made a better show; but there was a wistfulness in her face, and an eager-

ness in her eye, which the skilful understood and enjoyed. Still, she had hard trials at home, and the ill-humour and, at times, fury of the "brilliant and genial Dacres," were spent upon her lavishly.

The most curious change in him was a recurrence to Mr. West. "It served you right. There you had a sensible, steady man, that loved you, and would have cherished you all his life long. A man of substance, too. None of your skipjacks, that are here to-day, and gone in a moment. I told you how it would be; I warned you at the time; but I am never attended to."

But this was not the worst. The delight of the colony, of the Filbys, Dempseys, and the rest, how were they to bear that?

Harco indeed had "swaggered so much," as Mr. Filby said, had taken such insufferable airs, that these people might fairly indemnify themselves now that *their* turn was come. Even as news it was welcome. We may tremble indeed for the unhappy girl

in such hands, on the occasion when she must eventually show herself on the Port. She *must* do that, for her absence would be as remarkable and cause double the entertainment that her presence would.

Harco slept very well that night, considering all "his trials." But Lucy had a troubled night indeed. With all her trust and confidence, her father's shrewd knowledge of the world, as it seemed to her, made his construction to be too probable. Men as noble, as handsome as her Vivian, were often creatures of circumstances, and were driven to do these things. What was the mystery? Why did he not tell her?

The next day all her worst anticipations were fulfilled. The news had got abroad. One would think, that one of the royal dukes was coming; or that the *Eagle* had gone down; or that a *real* person of condition, wealthy, and connected with aristocratic families, had come to live there. People paid visits on the strength of it. Young ladies ran into

each other's lodgings to tell the news. Many "knew it all along." "Serve her right," was the common remark; "what could she expect,—a schoolgirl like that, laying her trap for a man of that kind? I saw he was amusing himself."

"I saw the hang-dog look he had," said Captain Filby, "on his face. I said it; but every one was so wise, you know. The moment that Dacres took to bullying, I knew the game was up. 'You must fix a day. You shan't go on board the *Eagle* until you do it.' Egad! he didn't leave by the *Eagle*, sir. Where is he now, I'd like to know? Snugly lunching off a *cotelette* at Amiens or Orleans, with a good bottle of *Cote Rotie* before him, and his tongue in his cheek. 'Pon my honour, I admire him! He deserves every credit, for it was a regular plant, nothing else."

Poor Lucy, we say again, pale, fluttering at her little heart, and having before her the dreadful trial of waiting and expecting, the

worst element in all our anxieties. Nothing could be resolved, she knew, for weeks. Meanwhile she would go through with it as bravely as she could, and she determined that very day to face the crowd on the Port. Reluctantly she had determined on the necessity of this course, and half persuaded her father. He was decided by the "persecution," as he called it, of "the mean set," who kept calling, and looking in, maliciously, with an air of sympathy, but in reality to see how she bore it.

That fine afternoon, there was a great crowd on the Port; for that little bit of news had got abroad, like everything else also. Every one was in great alacrity, and fearful of being late. Every one was looking out eagerly and expectant. Doctor White was conspicuous, and at various times surrounded with groups of friends. His story had just begun to get abroad now.

"Oh, did you hear *that*? He and White

had a quarrel not an hour before, and White talked of sending a friend to him ; but before the friend could be got, my gentleman had flown. I wonder, was he an official at all ? Filby says the *name* was in the list."

Dr. White was very moderate in his statements.

"No brave man," he said, "boasts of these things ; and I don't wish to speak of the matter. I am very sorry for the poor young lady herself, who has been so treated ; for her sake I feel a delicacy. Though in justice to myself, Colonel Vivian, I am sorry to say, ever since his shameful charge against me broke down, has shown a very unworthy spirit ; and last evening he so far forgot himself as to use such language as no gentleman could pass over. I put myself in Captain Filby's hands at once ; but before Captain Filby could take any action in the matter, *he had fled !*"

This was true. At a late hour the night

before, Dr. White had called on Captain Filby, who had then his head all swathed in flannels, and his wig laid by for the night. He had been received with much ill-humour by the captain. "Why didn't you come?" he said. "You're too late. The fellow's off. Didn't you know that, now? Haven't you killed enough in your *own* line, without trying a new one?"

Hush! here they were. Harco, much crestfallen, decayed, and wanting all his effrontery and spirits to keep him up, and with the true "hang-dog" look; and poor Lucy, pale and trembling on his arm. We had no delicacy in the colony. Everyone, on any occasion, never stinted themselves in a "good stare," or a "good rush" from any motives of the kind. There were plenty of smiles; plenty of open whispers. Their friends seemed to fall away—the Guernsey Beaufort gentlemen in particular; they did not come up as usual. Mr. Wilkinson

coloured when he saw them. It was only when the good Mrs. Dalrymple and her daughters appeared, that sympathy at all was shown. As for Mr. Blacker, he was in *a great hurry* this evening, and could only spare a "How-dye-do, Dacres?"

Some admirers of Mr. Dempsey, the witty "author" of the colony, were greatly amused—in *convulsions*—at what, *they knew*, was passing in his mind. In vain he disclaimed with a conscious smile. They knew better. He could not persuade them. They *did* know better; for what they suspected had not occurred to the ready and lively Dempsey; but it suggested something to him. That night, in his garret (only we do not *know* that term at the colony), he was very busy, and on the next morning every one was "in convulsions" over a capital "skit" suspected to have come "from his pen." There was a malicious spinster who took the trouble of copying the lines and sending

worst element in all our anxieties. Nothing could be resolved, she knew, for weeks. Meanwhile she would go through with it as bravely as she could, and she determined that very day to face the crowd on the Port. Reluctantly she had determined on the necessity of this course, and half persuaded her father. He was decided by the "persecution," as he called it, of "the mean set," who kept calling, and looking in, maliciously, with an air of sympathy, but in reality to see how she bore it.

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them to Miss Dacres. The verses ran something to this effect :—

The gallant young colonel
Is gone to the war ;
'Tis feared he has left,
And will travel too far.

For new conquests ready,
For me, or for you ;—
Ah ! what will become
Of deserted L-lu ?

And where are the walks
And the talks of the pair ?
The fair one will have
No more trips to the Fair.

She will grow pale,
And "poor H-rco" turn blue ;
I declare we all must
Pity pretty L-lu.

Poor Lucy—poor Lulu ! This was a sore trial. Her only comfort was, they had not sent them to Harco. Thank God, he was spared that !

The worst was the bearing and manner—the triumphantly insolent manner—of Doctor White. This man's reputation increased

prodigiously on his late victory. Every one had the story of his interview; the “sensation” scene with the colonel, in which the latter had shown such a want of spirit, and had fled so ignominiously. Some could not believe it, then, on the doctor’s *statement*; he was so well corroborated. The indiscreet Harco helped the case a good deal.

Poor Lucy! we say again. Against all this she bore up manfully—inspired hope even into Harco, and extorted admiration from the colony for the gallant way in which she faced them all!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BALL.—ACT THE FIRST.

AT last here was the night of the Beaufort entertainment fairly come round. The room in the établissement had been exquisitely decorated. Lenôtre, a famous gardener from Hâvre, had come over and superintended the flowers. The mayor had lent shrubs, even trees, in square tubs, from his grounds. The outside of the building was hung with variegated lamps. The whole town, the fishermen even, gathered in crowds to see the company arrive. Mounted gendarmes were on duty. The orchestra, “re-

inforced" also from Hâvre, was in the gallery. The supper was undertaken by "Le Buff," of the Royal. The decorations and upholstering were under the charge of the local "Furnisher." It would be a superb ceremonial, and long remembered in the place.

Yet the liberal host, busy and going about, had a nervous, restless manner with him, that did not escape the notice of Mr. Blacker and one or two more. That sense of uneasiness which seemed floating in the air, that indistinct rumour as of something coming, but which had yet no shape, seemed to be present in his face. At another season it would have been magnified into dreadful proportions, and monstrous and circumstantial stories would have been abroad. But there was a sort of delicacy now : to-morrow would be time enough. It would be inconvenient believing such things of a splendid entertainer at whose house you were. They would shut eyes and ears for that night.

By ten o'clock the guests were arriving. They were received in person by Mr. Beaufort himself and Mrs. Beaufort, that lady looking very worn, and having an air of fright in her face. She was sumptuously dressed. The Dieppe milliner had been put to her best, and had got down a lace dress and silk flowers from Mademoiselle Victorine, the great Paris milliner of those days. Mr. Beaufort was unusually gracious and voluble, all smiles and talk. Even Captain Filby, in a blue coat and gilt buttons, and a puce-coloured under waistcoat, as he looked round, was a little confounded, and seemed to think those ruthless stories, which he had circulated so piteously, had been more or less logically confuted. Here was the maire, in full official dress, and the maire's lady, bowing and bending; here was the juge de paix, the English consul, the English clergyman, M. le Capitaine "Dango," who was pronounced, as it were, commander-in-chief there, and many more persons of distinction.

They all flocked in. And here a little after came Mr. Harcourt Dacres and his daughter. Any "taste of divarshion" made him forget everything, even, as he said, "if he was to be arrested the next hour." So he was all beaming smiles and ready wit. But a hundred eyes followed Lucy as she walked, leaning on the gay Dacres' arm, charmingly dressed, fresh as a rose-bud, but very nervous and sad at heart. What malicious eyes! what more malicious mouths! on which rested a meaning smile, and between which fluttered the scarcely whispered sentences: "He's gone off, you know, and left her;" "I always said it would come to that;" "He got out of it, sir, and deserted her;" "Don't you see she is trying to bear up? She comes here to show she doesn't feel it. It won't do—won't do, ma'am!" Need we say that these were Captain Filby's remarks? That officer ought to have been in his bed, resting his racked bones. He was in agony, and his old feet were cramped into tight varnished boots.

The wines, too, strong and delicious, he would not be able to resist, and by that time to-morrow night he would be roaring, up in his lonely cheap room. But there are parties ready to get their pleasures “done” at such an awfully ruinous discount.

Mr. Blacker, too, we should have seen him, an unofficial M.C., useful and everywhere. He, too, was content to overlook the past, and his own ungenerous suspicions. He was introducing, marshalling, pushing his way, making sudden swoops right through the room, riding rough-shod over every obstacle, to seize on some gentleman or lady, whispering some agitated message. For one person he was looking very eagerly. Mr. Morton, and his friend Mr. Parkes—“son, you know, of one of our English judges.”

“Most curious; so it is. They were to have been back, without fail, to-day. Ran up to Hâvre, on some business. I should be so grieved if they missed all this.”

With this on his mind, shading his eyes,

peering down the room, rushing on these sudden expresses at surprised strangers who resembled his missing friends, Mr. Blacker was not a little disturbed. Suddenly a letter was brought to him, which he took out his gold glasses to read, and read with as much importance as though he was on horseback commanding an army in a battle.

“God bless me, where are they? Why don’t they come in? God bless me, I must see about this.”

The ball was now, as Mr. Dacres said, in full swing, he himself having been a “fine” dancer in his day. “Many’s the time I’ve footed it in St. Patrick’s Hall, at the Lord Lieutenant’s ball, and saw five o’clock coming in at the windows as bright as a new two-sous piece.” He had taken out various married ladies for quadrilles, which I believe were then danced with far more agility and elegant motion than they are at present. The waltzing, too, was not of the present near and dear pattern, but was of the old

three-time dervish character, and which, correct and decent as it was, scandalised that modest generation. Here, too, Mr. Dacres was at home, his "St. Patrick's Hall practice standing to him." He was the life and soul of the party, he said himself. And he was now hunting industriously for a lady fair, "the charming Wilkinson," with whom he longed, as he said pleasantly, "to take the floor."

But the charming Wilkinson was not there—neither that bewitching lady nor her husband. It had not yet got abroad that there had been a scene the day before, a reconciliation and making up, and determination to return home to their dear old England, which they said they wished they had never left. The packet, which sailed according to the tide, left that night at one o'clock, and they would get away privately by it from this wretched place, into which they wished they had never come. Yet there would, of course, come a time when

they would look back to their gay life there, and quote incidents to their dull agricultural friends; and it is to be feared the bewitching Wilkinson often thought, not with displeasure, of the seductive Ernest Beaufort. To Lucy, the sight of this gay scene, the lights, the flowers, the music, and the bright company, only made her more dispirited. Her little heart was heavy; she would not dance, though she was glad to see her dear Harco in such spirits, and his figure all but “capering,” as he said, afar off. Somehow, before her was a faint hope that before the brilliant night was over something might come about. And to this door, where so many were coming in, her eyes were always wandering. Suddenly, to her astonishment, they fell upon a grim figure standing by itself, in some finery that was sober, and of an old-fashioned cut, and whose eyes were also wandering round the room in search of something.

It was Margaret; and though for a

moment Lucy felt the old repulsion, her real feeling was that of an overpowering tumult, half of uneasiness, half terror, for she had an instinct that *he* had returned also. For all through she had associated the two. Here was Margaret returned without him. Her heart sank. She fancied she saw a triumphant, defiant look in Margaret's face. She could not restrain herself, and, fluttering over, stood before her, down-cast and trembling.

"Oh," she said, "you have returned!
Where is he?"

Margaret looked down on her coldly.

"Ah! he will return,—but *not to you!*
Do not think it."

"Oh, what have you done with him, cruel woman?" cried Lucy, piteously. "Tell me, and I will forgive you all."

Margaret turned away coldly and scornfully, and made her no answer. When Lucy sought her again, she could not find her. People remarked this poor *natural* child on

this quest, looking here and there. It seemed to her like a troubled dream—the lights, the music, the flowers, and all. Harco was too busy enjoying himself to attend to her.

She saw a little room opening beyond several others; a “cosy” little place with a green table, meant for cards and the old people. It was deserted as yet—perhaps had not been discovered. She looked in, and sighed at its loneliness. Perhaps it was not so much for Margaret she was looking, as that she had a presentiment that in this delightful scenery of her dream, her lost friend might, angel-like, reappear. The music, the *valse bacchante*, was borne to her from a distance—it was exquisite.

She had never been at a ball—the Pringle discipline did not allow that; the sweet perfumes, the lovely dreams, the French marquises — only that little heart was so heavy. She heard a voice behind, and turned. It was Dr. White; dressed out

magnificently. (In those days gentlemen were more gaudy in their attire, wearing rich stocks, pins, double waistcoats, &c.)

He was a little agitated, and spoke hurriedly :

“ I have been following you all the night. Who are you looking for ? What does this mean ? ”

Lucy drew herself up, and without answering turned to leave.

“ Do not go away, *Lucy*,” he said, more earnestly. “ Cannot you understand me yet ? Look at what I give up for you—the splendid chance thrown away. Another letter this morning——”

“ It is nothing to me,” said Lucy, faltering, “ what you give up. You should not speak to me in that way, and after the cruel way you have behaved to *him*——”

“ But why have I behaved so ? ” he said. “ Can you not guess ? How has he behaved to me ? I told you he should repent. He will never dare to return to face me ! I

have not answered these good offers made to me by Lady Pilpay. Can you guess why I wait on, here ?”

Lucy groaning, almost reckless, answered him—“I do not care to know ; it is nothing to me what you do. God will punish you yet for what you have done. And Vivian, whom you slander, I know, I am confident, I feel *here*,” and she laid her hand on her gentle heart, “will come back to us.”

“Never,” said the other. “He dare not.”

“As for you,” went on Lucy, “I cannot tell you how I detest and loathe you. And even if what you hint were true about Vivian, beside him you would seem a mere——” She could not finish. “Oh yes, he will come back to me !”

“We shall see,” he said ; “and I promise you to wait to see. And I promise you, too, Miss Lucy, we shall bring down this pride of yours yet. If I stay on here for months—I have friends who work with me—Margaret

West loves *you* and loves him. She will not lose sight of him, never fear. Ah, Lucy!" he went on, "I do not heed your words, hard as they are. They are folly; you don't mean them, I know. Can you not see the truth—*how I love you*, and would sacrifice *all* for you! That man—you *cannot* marry him, and I will tell you, if you ask me the reason. Margaret West is here to-night; ask *her* for the story she has discovered. She has tracked him, and though he has dared to show his face here——"

"What!" cried Lucy with a scream of delight, "he *has come back*! I knew he would. Oh, Vivian! Vivian!"

The doctor stamped his foot impatiently.

"I say, if he *did* come back to you; your rapture is premature. Listen to me. Lucy, I am not to be trifled with. This only inflames me more. I tell you, whether he comes or no, I shall ruin him, destroy him—and to-morrow morning—she has all the proofs—unless—and you may yet save him."

“How all? What do you mean?”

“You must give him up, and for ever. Look here: this glass door opens on the beach. The packet sails to-night, at past midnight. If you love this man so much, you will be willing to do something to save him from *disgrace*; for disgrace—ruin eternal—will fall on him! You have plenty of time. Come, let us leave this place. I am content to wait till you learn to like me; for I love you, Lucy. Come, no trifling with me. Ah! then, you *shall* come.”

And crossing hurriedly, he had closed the door. Lucy could not cry out—terror had so taken possession of her. He had seized her wrist, and had opened one of the little glass doors which ran round every side of the *établissement*. The cold sea air came in; she heard the sound of the waves, saw the tranquil blue of the water, and even the slow-moving trail of the smoke of the *Eagle*. That sight gave her courage. She thought she would have fainted; and as he was

dragging her through the door, she again uttered her cry, "Vivian, save me!"

Again that cry was to be heard. The kindly Providence that watches over lovers, sent him. She heard the shutting of the door behind, and two gentlemen had rushed in.

It was Vivian indeed! She had flown to him, in a moment; in a moment her arms were round him. She knew all the time he was true and faithful, and would return to her; and here he was!

With his hand on the door, the doctor was standing there, irresolute, thus baffled a second time. Yet his eyes were not on Vivian, but on the stranger. What a sense of shame and helplessness. It was Doctor Adams, in his cloak. For a moment, as the newly-met lovers were having out their delight at meeting, he stood there irresolute, with the half-open door half covering him, with his hand trying to cover his face—and

strange, detected, hang-dog air—then taking a sudden resolution, disappeared.

Closing the door sharply, no one had indeed noticed him, beyond that there was a fourth person there, and the joy at meeting was exquisite. But Lucy had forgotten the danger.

That night was a golden dream, indeed, for her! The exquisite music, the lights, and the one she loved so, given back to her.

“I could not stay from you,” he whispered. “I tried it—I did, indeed—but I could not. And when I heard what was going on here, and how you were suffering, I set off at once. For this night, at least, let us be happy, darling; I am with you again, and that is all!”

“Oh, you have come back! I was afraid you had left us for ever.”

As they left the room, Margaret was standing by them, like some evil angel, and never spoke. She looked after them with her dull

smile. "I shall wait and see this out," she said.

Thus the pair passed through the room, to the amazement and disappointment of the crowd. What! come back, and in so dramatic a way? It was too satisfactory. Every one in the colony was witness.

Shall we say there was disappointment? The bright beaming Lucy was in Paradise—on her lover's arm, clinging to him, looking up into his face; it was too much for them all!

What on earth did it mean? A buzz went about: "He's come back! Did you hear? Did you see him?" It was so astounding, so unexpected! Yes, there they were, at the head of a quadrille—the handsome Vivian, a little thoughtful and careworn, and Lucy the brightest, most engaging child in the room. Such a ball, but a golden dream certainly.

"But there's a screw loose somewhere," whispered Captain Filby, "depend on it. Didn't you see his hang-dog look?"

Though she had a presentiment of some mystery coming, Lucy looked up fondly at her handsome lover now restored to her, as she made that splendid progress through the room.

“Lucy, Lucy dear,” he said, when they had got free of the crowd, “what will you say to me? I have returned, but oh! it has all failed! How shall I tell you? But we must not think of that yet, for years perhaps; indeed, we should never have thought of it.”

She turned pale, and stopping short gave a faint cry.

“Listen a moment. There is one course which I *could* do, and which I *should* do; for you must not be sacrificed. I could wait—wait on here, until a change came.”

“And why not?” said Lucy, eagerly. “If you are willing, I am—as long—as long as you will.”

“But that, Lucy, would be dearly purchased at my—at our disgrace. I should

leave the army. We are on the eve of some fighting, and for a colonel to desert his regiment——”

“No, no,” said she, “never! As you say, it would be our disgrace. But,” she added, almost passionately, “what is this dreadful mystery that seems growing in size every moment? Why will you not tell me? I could help you to bear it.”

He shook his head. “Impossible! I dare not tell you. I love myself too much. You might despise and hate me when you heard it.”

“Despise and hate!” she repeated, her arm relaxing on his. “Why?”

“I say, you might,” he said, anxiously. “But you will learn it soon, I have no doubt. We have an enemy who will take care to let you know. But I thought you could trust me. What have I suffered since! If I was a thing that you could despise or hate, you would not have heard of this. It is because I consider it, and make a difficulty of it, that

I have brought myself to this wretched pass."

"I know it," said Lucy, firmly, "and I believe and trust in you, as much as I love you. There! I know what you shall do, and what you must do. You must go—leave this on the day fixed. Never think of me. I shall face these people, if I know that you are true to me—*that* will support me—and will look forward patiently to the day when I shall see you return. By that time we shall hope and pray that all clouds shall have passed by. That is settled, and I shall do nothing—nothing else."

A light came into his eyes. "Sweet, dearest girl, if you *can* have such a trust in me, I believe it to be the only course. Any other brings ruin and despair. Ah! see she is watching us!" and they saw the figure standing not very far off, stiffly and haughtily, with her cold eyes on them.

"She hates me, and would kill me, I believe, if she could," said Lucy, excitedly.

“Yes ; she thinks, too, she has me in this difficulty, and is watching my struggles ; but we shall defy her yet.”

“Why not now ?” said Lucy, still excited. “and tell her *now* of what we have resolved on. *That* would destroy all her wicked schemes. Come, quick !” and Lucy eagerly drew her lover over.

They were before Margaret in a moment, who still watched their approach calmly. “He has told me all,” said Lucy to her ; “and we have settled everything. He shall go ; and I can wait—wait for years—until he returns, when every obstacle shall have passed away, and shall hope and pray for his return. So now you have no secret, and no more power over him, and your unkindness and cruelty can do us no harm.”

“Yes,” added Vivian, “and you can return to your unhappy brother, whose passions you are working on, with news that I defy your threats, and that this dear girl

trusts me, and trusts me for ever. The only difficulty I had *now* has passed away."

Two bright triumphant faces were looking at her, full of love, hope, and happiness—were looking at her, full of confidence and security. In spite of her cold command of herself, a look of baffled rage worked in her features, yet it was the rage of the lioness who cannot protect her whelps. She said not a word; but, as they turned away, she looked after them with a sort of despair.

"Then is this the end of all my schemes? *They* will be happy at last, and *he* wretched for ever! And I am to go back to his sick bed, where he is lying in feverish expectation for this great news. It will kill him. My poor, poor brother!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BALL.—ACT THE SECOND.

MR. DACRES, enjoying himself vastly, fanning his face with his handkerchief, and performing quadrilles with all the agility of a “four-year-old,” said, again and again, that he had not so enjoyed himself “since Patrick’s-night ball,” alluding of course to the famous entertainment given by some lord-lieutenant of Ireland in honour of the patron saint of the country. He was “booked four-deep,” and many ladies—“young ones too, sir”—were delighted with Mr. Dacres’ vivacity, and, it must be

said, with the rather highly coloured compliments which he paid them. These were in "the light of her eyes" tone. In this vein, as he was going to "take the floor" with some "Miss Mary," he felt a hand on his arm, and a gentleman standing before him said, with cheerful recognition,

"Mr. Dacres, isn't it?"

"So it is! My dear sir, how do you do?"

"You remember me, don't you?"

"Well, now that you ask me, I can't say exactly——Your face, sir, is as familiar to me as my own in the glass, but as for names——What, not Sir John Trotter?" he said, becoming haughty, suddenly recollecting that he had been "injured in a nice point" by that gentleman.

"Come, Mr. Dacres, I am so glad to see you again. I've been wanting you at Trotter's-town, and have been intending to write to you every day."

"Oh, indeed, Sir John," said Dacres,

softening ; “ that’s the way, is it ? Here, Lulu, pet, come over here, dear. Here’s Sir John Trotter, of whom you’ve heard me speak many and many a time.”

This he added with a sort of pathos ; and Lucy said, smiling,

“ Oh, yes ! How do you do, Sir John ? ”

She had, indeed, heard her father speak many and many a time of the baronet, coupling his name with the most uncomplimentary epithets.

“ My son is getting quite well again,” said Sir John, “ thanks be to the Lord ! So now I have time to look about me. I am on my way to see him at Paris. I got all your messages by your kind friend Mr. West.”

“ By my friend, West ? ” repeated Mr. Dacres, wonderingly.

“ Yes !—that time he visited me about you.”

“ Oh—true, true,” said Mr. Dacres, with a readiness he had picked up in court ; “ to

be sure. That time he went to you. And I am glad you found him satisfactory.”

“You couldn’t have chosen a warmer ambassador ; he has said everything he could, for he saw I was a little put out, you know. He said you would write, and I was surprised at not hearing from you.”

“Oh, we are so taken up here, my dear sir. But I am going back soon to old England. But what’s in the wind now? Tell me about all this.”

Lucy was listening, wondering, and with something like a pang at her heart. Poor West! This was generous and noble indeed! *This* was the way he had employed his time, when *she* had forgotten him, and had abandoned him.

* * *

It was, indeed, to be a night of dramatic business. There was the theory of shifting figures “on the dais,” where was the mayor and the distinguished guests, all round the

amiable host, complimenting, smiling, bowing. It had just come to midnight, when one of the servants, coming up to him, put a note into his hand.

“Not too late to ask for an invitation, I see,” said the mayor, smiling, to Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, whose anxious, worn face was turned to the note. She saw a look of trouble in his face, and, in a moment, up came Mr. Blacker, express, pushing his way through.

“See here, Mr. Beaufort, could you spare us a few minutes?—a most important matter,” and he took him by the arm, and whispered to him in his most important way.

Captain Filby was close by, impatient and out of humour, because he thought supper had been too long delayed. With “his eye on him,” he noticed that Mr. Beaufort was dejected, with a forced smile.

“You see I am engaged at present,” he said. “Later—by-and-by.”

But Mr. Blacker, growing more important, whispers again ; and then Mr. Beaufort went with him.

The captain very curious ; and as he said, in his favourite phrase, “ that he knew there was a screw loose somewhere,”—the total of “screw” in this state this amiable gentleman was discovering was something enormous—he followed them cautiously. “I kept my eye on ’em, and, just at the door, saw that new man, Morton, and his friend, the judge’s son, come up, and our respected clergyman, and the consul, sir, was with them. Then didn’t I know something was up, and one of the big screws loose, especially when the whole party went into the little room of the établissement, where they read the papers.” What would the captain have given to have been present at that scene ! The gentlemen newly arrived were in their travelling dresses ; the wondering consul and clergyman invited by them to be present ; and one of the travellers

stepping forward and saying calmly, “I have asked you to come in here to put a simple question.”

“I don’t understand this proceeding at all,” said Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, a little wildly—“questioning me in this extraordinary way at my own party.”

“It is for your own advantage,” said the other; “and if you prefer it, we will go back and put it before all the room. No; you would not like that.”

“I don’t understand this business either,” said the consul. “Mr. Guernsey Beaufort is our host, and enterprising and as liberal——”

“Ah! there is the mistake,” said the other; “and it brings me’ to the question I would ask. Before these gentlemen, I ask you, do you still maintain you are Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, of Beaufort Manor?”

“I never said that. We are of the same family—the same Beauforts——”

“My good gracious!” said Mr. Blacker. “You distinctly told me you were, and

invited me to Beaufort Manor. And I must say," he added, "I heard you say so again and again."

"I have been there often," said Mr. Beaufort, hurriedly, "and I know the place well, for my wife was a Beaufort—daughter to a captain—on my solemn faith, yes; and we *are* of the same family."

"You are not," said Mr. Morton, promptly; "and you never *were* there. I may tell these gentlemen I am Mr. Guernsey Beaufort, of Beaufort Manor, who have travelled over to expose this person."

"It is false!" gasped the detected host—"it is untrue."

"I have proof, too, which I was delayed in obtaining, but which will be complete in the morning, that this man had carried on this same imposture at Ostend—giving himself out under the same name, and swindling some of the tradespeople there. If he denies it——"

"I admit it—I own it all," said the

unhappy host, turning from one to the other. "But, for God's sake, take pity on us *for to-night*. It can do no good. And my poor innocent wife, who has no part in it—she is of good family—she is indeed a Beaufort, and we can prove it—for *her* sake—a poor woman—just for *this* night. It can do no good, an exposé of this sort—just for a few hours——"

The clergyman said, gravely :

"I think there could be no harm in doing so. You can wait till the morning. She is what he says—a kind, charitable, innocent lady; and for *her* sake, I think Mr. Guernsey Beaufort—I mean *you*, sir—can wait until the morning."

"There can be no harm in that," said the genuine Mr. Beaufort. "You can go back to the company."

Captain Filby had "his eye on him" as he did come back to the company, and noticed his pale agitated face.

“There’s something wrong, or my name’s not Filby. A bailiff or a warrant. I know the look of a man served with one of those things. It is no reason he should be keeping supper back from us in this way.”

The pale and anxious face of Mrs. Guernsey Beaufort—we may so call her, because she *was* a Beaufort of some description—eagerly watched her husband’s return. He came up to madame the mayoress, and, with a smile that our Lucy remembered, said :

“It is unpardonable of Le Bœuf. I assure you it was ordered for twelve punctually. I must go and see after him myself. Pay what you will, and whom you will, you see, madame, the master must do a great deal himself”—a speech afterwards repeated often in Dieppe circles, when the curious story of the Beaufort ball was told, as a triumph of assurance and self-possession.

Mr. Beaufort was seen to go out of a side door which led to the restaurant of the place,

and was shortly followed by his brother Ernest. Those two gentlemen were never seen again by that company, or by the colony.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BALL.—ACT THE THIRD.

BY half-past twelve Captain Filby had lost all decency, and was positively outrageous in his language.

“Asking people to famish them in this way! I believe there will be nothing to eat or drink at all, and that the whole is a plant. I am not a bit obliged to them for their cold dry lodging. I want no victuals at these unearthly hours. At twelve o’clock you can manage to pick a bit;” with more to the like effect.

But now Le Bœuf himself had come with the news. Where was M. Beaufore ?

“Oh, he’s all right, never fear ; he’s gone on. Open the doors, and we’ll follow quick enough.”

But Le Bœuf would not have that view.

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Where indeed ! Who so fitting to ask, after a quarter of an hour’s wait, as pale Madame le Beaufore ? With a trembling voice, she—she does not know ; then, very faintly, “Perhaps he has gone home, unwell.”

The truth flashes on Le Bœuf—a man of quick wit, and accustomed to men, and to all sorts of men—that is, of customer shape.

“Heaven !” he cries, slapping his forehead, “I am assassinated ! He has done me ! He has escaped ! The tide served at midnight !”

These wild cries were heard by at least a dozen hungry people standing round. Each of these was good for a dozen others,

as conduits of information. It was known over the room in a moment that the Beauforts had blown up—fled by the packet—what every one had, of course, long foreseen and said would take place. But the behaviour of the infuriated Le Bœuf was what indeed turned the fury of the crowd against their hosts; for that officer turned the key in his supper-room door and stood before it swearing, and declaring over and over again that he had been robbed and “assassinated,” and asking who was to pay him for his outlay—his partridges from Normandy, his pâtés, and his rare wines from Paris. It was almost comic to see the famished crowd pressing on him, and reasoning with him almost. He was not thinking of the future, but again and again “who was to pay him, to settle with him?” As for Captain Filby, he became desperate, and said the “keys ought to be taken from the ruffian.” “Was there ever such a set of born swindlers?” he asked, and, from that

hour, every stranger who came to the place was sure to hear a savage account of a set of scoundrel swindlers who disgraced the place, and came here to humbug honest people, and who he hoped were hung by that time.

But, to the surprise of many, Mr. Harcourt Dacres did not join in this cry. He said it was indecent; and many were the sneers when he was seen going into a room where an unhappy lady was lying fainting on a sofa, and whom he finally, with his daughter, brought out on his arm.

The half-mad Le Bœuf, like every Frenchman, savage to women when his pocket was touched, seemed about to spit at her, and shook his trembling fist in her face. But Harco, giving her over to Lucy, stepped up to him, and caught him by the collar.

“Keep yourself quiet, you ungracious fellow. This woman has done nothing.”

“She has,” he shrieked; “she has robbed me and my children. Ten thousand francs will not pay me. She is a swindler, a——”

“Hold your tongue, you scoundrel,” said Harco, fiercely, “or I will call the gendarme!”

Captain Filby heard, and sneered: “No wonder he’s their champion. It comes home, sir. Birds of a feather——”

They took her home, all but insensible. Her young children were in bed and asleep. Fortunately for her, too, the landlord and, more fortunately still, the landlady were in bed. From a high hill over the town a faint little speck of light could be seen—the old *Eagle*, now some six or seven miles on her course, having Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson—Mrs. Wilkinson with their suite—travelling carriage, &c., on board, who, to their amazement, had met Mr. Guernsey and Mr. Ernest Beaufort on deck.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HE IS COMING!

THE Doctor, who wrote on "Idiocy," was right. For some time back, through the length and breadth of France, dull, heavy rumours had been drifting, that a dreadful enemy, who came like a comet, at long intervals, approached slowly and ravaged the country, might soon be looked for. A sort of epidemic, that seemed more terrible than it does now; for it was unfamiliar, and medical men knew not how to deal with it. It was known to be in France—its approach was slow. It seemed to come

with the solemn steady strides of a fairy-tale giant, while the people fled before it in a frightened herd—that is, people of condition and substance. A great deal of his ravages were owing to the wretched drainage, the open sewer which then every French street was, and the rank odours which filled the air.

Our colony had a good deal of what Captain Filby called “true British pluck,” and what, it fancied, was pluck and indifference. This coming plague was called by the English “an infernal foreigneering thing ;” it would not have the impudence to touch them ; they could face it without that unworthy crying, or flying, or herding, or, as Captain Filby profanely said, “jabbering prayers.” Perhaps at the bottom of this indifference was the feeling that they could not fly, that they were driven to the edge of the sea, with their back to a wall, as it were, and must face it. How easy to cross over into dear,

happy old England. But, alas !—— Still, it was not so likely to come *there*—to the charming Dieppe, always so bright, and gay, and holiday-like, so *fashionable* too, and rising every year into greater and greater request. As well might little Polly or Alice, taken to the pantomime, and looking on at the gorgeous scenes of delight there exhibited, suppose that sorrow or sickness *could* afflict the exquisite golden angels, and queens of delight and happiness there exhibited. The marquise starts, and smiles contemptuously : the unclean dragon dare not. He should be ordered out of *the* road ; much as the duchess's men ordered the beggars out of her road, on her estate.

Yet coming he was—steadily and surely. Now at Paris—now nearer ; now at Rouen, raging there among the old houses, and streets ; now at Havre, and *then* we begin to turn pale. The French were very timorous and excited, but the bold English knew it would not touch them.

Captain Filby spoke of it as he would of a "low, beggarly Frenchman," and shouldered his stick, as though he would thus resent the liberty. The sun, too, it was noticed, was very strong, the heat more oppressive, and the drains—but Dieppe was notorious. But was not the ball coming on? It was time enough to think of all that unpleasantness later, after the diversion. Harco was in a mortal fright, and grew quite low-spirited, "I know it'll catch me," he said, despondingly. "I've a presentiment of that. I'm the worst subject in the world, Lulu, dear. Poor papa is crushed down. I know it. I wish to God you were married off. I'll not stay, believe me, an hour—not an hour after Penny has made the knot as tight, as his clumsy fingers can do it; not an half hour. No, I am as couragous as any man living. Put me in front of a cannon, and see how I'll behave. But of this sort of thing I'd always a sort of morbid terror from that high. Now, just one touch here, light as a

feather," added Harco, laying his finger on what Doctor Macan would have called 'Th' Appygasthrum, "and I'm gone, Lulu, pet, never to stand up, and address a jury again. No, no; I go in the *Eagle* the same day and hour, or no one goes."

"To be sure, darling," said Lucy, "and I'm so glad, for my heart was breaking at the thought of leaving you."

"Oh, that's all very well," said Harco. "But how's it to be done?"

The difficulty of all the English, was *his* difficulty also. It was easy to get on board the *Eagle*, but the claims of the trusting, easy, suffering class, who were ungratefully called the "Dieppe cormorants," were in the way. Some of the sober, sensible French looked very grave. Mr. Penny, the clergyman, used the coming scourge freely as a text for sermons, and warned his congregation that "they should set their house in order."

"An uncommon stiff job for some of us,"

said Captain Filby. "Some of us are uncommon sharp set to find a house at all. Fiddledee, sir, it's fine talking, and fine preaching."

The Lutheran clergyman had grown grave also, and, it was discovered, had gone for a few days to see the wife and family, "who did not understand him." There were other signs of grace. The Dalrymples were cheerful and tranquil; Mr. Blacker uncommonly nervous, but convinced that the visitation would take no liberties with a man of his consequence. It was, indeed, a very dramatic situation. The expectance, the defiance, the ball coming on, and this dreadful scourge too. It seemed like the lull before a battle. The hard-working Abbé was seen flitting from lane to lane, in this hovel and in that house, quite happy and tranquil. He was afloat at early morn, and at late night. His gentle voice was heard more earnestly, down the ancient aisle of St. Jacques. That church, now, alas ! was

filled with real penitents, and some devotees of a more suspicious cast—those who feared more than those who loved. These were among the men chiefly, who were abject in their depreciation of the coming scourge. The old church never had such crowded congregations.

As the Abbé went along, his cassock tucked up, and crossing these open drains, which were wooing the dreadful visitor from afar, he often thought of West and his troubles. “He did not need my advice—he is angry—he thought me officious—and that it was not *my* business. I like him well, for his is a fine nature, and if I could only get him to shake off this folly. I shall pray for him, nevertheless, and Providence has done more wonderful things than casting down the scales from the eyes of a poor infatuated man!” Here was the purlieu he was in search of. The entrance to that alley where some fishermen were lying, and into which he

tripped as joyfully and eagerly as some of the "Bucks" did into a boudoir.

It was during this suspense and agitation, that some one with a face quite white was seen to enter hurriedly, cross over, and whisper to the mayor. That official, simpering and chattering to "Meestress Dick," the consul's lady, gave a start, and became pale and serious. He took his informant's arm, as Frenchmen are so fond of doing in confidential moments, and walked away with him to a corner. This seemed curious to all—too curious. It divested attention from the excitement of the hour.

"What mischief have they up now?" Captain Filby was heard to say. "Some one else broke, and bolted, horse and foot. Surely *that's* nothing so wonderful in *this* place."

Consul Dick was seen to approach the mayor, and to show desire of knowing what was all this? It was told with a real agitation

and embarrassment there was no mistaking. Another person of influence, Mr. Blacker, next joined; *he* started back stiffly, with a

“My God, no!”

What *was* it? No one could guess. It never occurred to one of them. At this feast, among its lights and flowers, they saw no hand-writing on the wall; even Mr. Blacker, who, invariably, as soon as he got possession of important news, went off express, and distributed it from house to house, and person to person, as a postman would do the mail just come in—forgot all his tactics. There Captain Filby—now eager as the rest—was gone up to ask, is told—and looks defiant and savage—

Yes; HE has come; is arrived in the town; has already selected a first victim, and is in a small house at the back of St. Jacques, the old church. Oh, that poor *Abbé*! Once it got out, this dreadful news, it was like a sudden sobering. No one thought of

the denied meal—the lights, or the flowers. The music, which had begun to play, now stopped of a sudden, as word floated up to the gallery. The enchanting valse Bacchante was hushed, the fiddles were laid down, heads looked round to the back, as if the only thought was then, and there, to fly and escape. The players were in a cluster whispering—for every one *whispered*. Le Bœuf was tamed—in this calamity he had forgotten his own.

Yes, HE had come, the great guest—as it were the king—or a *Grand Duke*—whom Le Bœuf had put-up at his hotel. This disdained such entertainment ; but drove about, sweeping whole streets clear. Yes, HE was in the town—had just come.

In half an hour it was known all over the town ; up narrow streets—down to the Port. Lights began to twinkle in the windows, for people were roused from their beds, to hear the dreadful news. Down on the pier, the fishing boats were going

out, but did not put to sea, the fishermen standing in a perfect crowd, talking it over in whispers again. It was a far more awful thing in its proportions *then*, than it has since been. The fishermen were considered happy—they could go on board, and sail away, with the sea between—*there* was impunity—many wished they were fishermen. Some—the women—their department seems to be this—had flown to the great crucifix, and were down on their knees at its feet, as on the night of the storm. Before two hours the chief of the police—surely a sacred person—was the next seized; before morning there were half a dozen. There *could* be no mistake, as some had fondly hoped. Every hour it seemed to multiply. Some, looking down into the street, saw people rushing by to fetch the doctor.

Now it is to be explained, what has puzzled many who visited the colony at a later period, and found DOCTOR MACAN, the chief

physician of the place, getting guinea fees in his own house—very rich, and considered very clever—and say how this was to be reconciled with the strange picture we have been giving of him all through.

It was in this dreadful trial that Doctor Macan was proved in the fire—weighed in the balance, and not found wanting. That upper-crust of carelessness—talk, punch, private censures, grumbling, and the rest—all fell off, as it were, and there he was revealed, a true and clever man—zealous, indefatigable—posting from house to house, and bedside to bedside; not vanquishing—for no one could hope to do that—but alleviating.

Doctor Macan was not “touched” himself—perhaps because he was not afraid. He went to poor and rich without distinction. Who would have thought, that came later, and saw the portly good-humoured physician in very shining black, a white tie, and a great deal of gold chain, that this impres-

sive and dignified gentleman, whom a Grand Duke sent for, was that "pot-house sort of fellow," that "poor devil, Macan." We should like to have seen any one so familiar as to talk of "Mac." Had he been cut off during that crisis in his duty, they would have set up a statue to him as they did at Marseilles to the bishop, who was zealous in the same good cause.

Gilbert, ill, feverish, hopeless, was lying awake, waiting restlessly for news from the ball. He had sent Margaret, who had promised him that a grand coup would be struck that night, and that the punishment she had so long promised him would on this night overtake the cruel and selfish. Every moment he was asking had she returned—had she returned? "Not that I wish them punished, or a hair of her head. But how can I endure to see them happy and prosperous or looking forward to happiness? They do not deserve it, and I *do* wish and pray that

it may be all ended for ever this night between them."

"But how would that help us, dear Gilbert?" said Constance. "Better cease to think of them altogether."

"So you think, Constance, and so do I, *if I could*. Is that she?—there she is! Come, Margaret, the news—quick! Is all at an end—is all over—is he unmasked?"

Margaret was gloomy and excited. "I have failed. Yes, they have been too crafty for me. Yes, all has failed, my long journey—all."

"Failed!" he almost cried, starting up, "and they are to be happy, while I am to live in this state of hell? Is there justice, or Providence? I tell you, I cannot endure that. It will not suit me—it were better it did; but it will keep me lingering on in this hell. Have you no pity for me, either of you, to see me reduced to this degradation? I could bear anything but this—to see them

any of our prophecies. I have tried—I have, indeed, but I have—to fight with this; but I am helpless. It has taken hold of my mind; and will destroy me; and is destroying me. I have say it is coming fast to that end which I have always expected, and the sooner it comes the better—the sooner the better. Tell me,” he went on in this excited way, and raising himself up—“tell me everything. I want to know, and I *must* know everything. What did they say—what were they doing—how did she look? Ah, you won’t tell me!”

It was not, indeed, Gilbert West who was uttering these incoherencies; it was a fevered and disordered brain. Then he sank back exhausted, and they saw his wild eyes fixed hopelessly on the ceiling. The two women looked at each other, Constance despairingly, Margaret desperately; and Margaret said, between her teeth: “This is *her* work!”

“Ah!” said Constance, impatiently, “*that*

is what has driven him to this. Working on his sense of injury, inflaming him in this way. Oh, it is wrong, and sinful, and cruel, and it has ended badly !”

Margaret started and surveyed her with an infuriated astonishment. She had never more than tolerated this girl, and that simply because she saw that Gilbert liked her. But now this tone confounded her.

“Do you dare to interfere with *me*—to find fault with *me*—I, that would give my heart’s blood for him ?”

“That is nothing,” said Constance, vehemently, “if you take his. This weary struggle will kill him, and—and—*I cannot stand by and see it !*”

She stood there, trembling at her own audacity. For Margaret hitherto had been a sort of little slave, never objecting, always gently obsequious even.

“It is sinful and cruel,” she went on, trembling ; “and false, too. For I do not believe, as you would have him believe, that

this girl is so full of hatred and wickedness. She is gentle and amiable, and there has been some mistake, I know. And I warn you now to stop this cruel inflaming of his mind with suspicions. I will *not* see it done any longer !”

Margaret was stricken dumb with wonder, and could not reply for a moment. She answered differently from what might have been expected.

“ I see through all this,” she said. “ You are a mere fool ; and, I warn you, don’t think of interfering with me. What, you love my brother better than I do !—I that have given my whole life to him—that have served him like a servant, and become old and withered in mind and body ! And you—you must set up for wisdom, and talk of cruelty ! Keep out of my path, I warn you. I know what will soothe him and ease him ; and I tell you the wicked girls, women or men, shall find punishment !”

As she swept away, she seemed to have awe-struck Constance, like one of the avenging furies.

But Margaret scarcely thought of her. She was, indeed, filled with that one idea—that absorbing thought. She went to her room with a sort of eagerness.

“They shall not have their triumph, and he this degradation and suffering—their calm happiness and sweet engagement, letter-writing, constancy, and, at last, the happy return and long wished-for marriage. Never! I shall do it at all risks, and spoil their jubilee.”

And Margaret, going to her desk, took out what she had carefully put by—the sheet of note-paper with the picture of Dr. Favre’s, the Paris establishment, at the top. At that late hour, and she heard the hoarse chiming of the church clock by, she was busy for long over her task. Then some one who was flitting about, keeping watch uneasily, heard her go down-stairs ; and then, looking

out, but did not put to sea, the fishermen standing in a perfect crowd, talking it over in whispers again. It was a far more awful thing in its proportions *then*, than it has since been. The fishermen were considered happy—they could go on board, and sail away, with the sea between—*there* was impunity—many wished they were fishermen. Some—the women—their department seems to be this—had flown to the great crucifix, and were down on their knees at its feet, as on the night of the storm. Before two hours the chief of the police—surely a sacred person—was the next seized; before morning there were half a dozen. There *could* be no mistake, as some had fondly hoped. Every hour it seemed to multiply. Some, looking down into the street, saw people rushing by to fetch the doctor.

Now it is to be explained, what has puzzled many who visited the colony at a later period, and found DOCTOR MACAN, the chief

physician of the place, getting guinea fees in his own house—very rich, and considered very clever—and say how this was to be reconciled with the strange picture we have been giving of him all through.

It was in this dreadful trial that Doctor Macan was proved in the fire—weighed in the balance, and not found wanting. That upper-crust of carelessness—talk, punch, private censures, grumbling, and the rest—all fell off, as it were, and there he was revealed, a true and clever man—zealous, indefatigable—posting from house to house, and bedside to bedside; not vanquishing—for no one could hope to do that—but alleviating.

Doctor Macan was not “touched” himself—perhaps because he was not afraid. He went to poor and rich without distinction. Who would have thought, that came later, and saw the portly good-humoured physician in very shining black, a white tie, and a great deal of gold chain, that this impres-

sive and dignified gentleman, whom a Grand Duke sent for, was that "pot-house sort of fellow," that "poor devil, Macan." We should like to have seen any one so familiar as to talk of "Mac." Had he been cut off during that crisis in his duty, they would have set up a statue to him as they did at Marseilles to the bishop, who was zealous in the same good cause.

Gilbert, ill, feverish, hopeless, was lying awake, waiting restlessly for news from the ball. He had sent Margaret, who had promised him that a grand coup would be struck that night, and that the punishment she had so long promised him would on this night overtake the cruel and selfish. Every moment he was asking had she returned—had she returned? "Not that I wish them punished, or a hair of her head. But how can I endure to see them happy and prosperous or looking forward to happiness? They do not deserve it, and I *do* wish and pray that

it may be all ended for ever this night between them."

"But how would that help us, dear Gilbert?" said Constance. "Better cease to think of them altogether."

"So you think, Constance, and so do I, *if I could*. Is that she?—there she is! Come, Margaret, the news—quick! Is all at an end—is all over—is he unmasked?"

Margaret was gloomy and excited. "I have failed. Yes, they have been too crafty for me. Yes, all has failed, my long journey—all."

"Failed!" he almost cried, starting up, "and they are to be happy, while I am to live in this state of hell? Is there justice, or Providence? I tell you, I cannot endure that. It will not suit me—it were better it did; but it will keep me lingering on in this hell. Have you no pity for me, either of you, to see me reduced to this degradation? I could bear anything but this—to see them

happy and prosperous. I have tried—I have, indeed, God knows—to fight with this; but I am helpless. It has taken hold of my mind; and will destroy me; and *is* destroying me. I dare say it is coming fast to that end which I have always expected, and the sooner it comes the better—the sooner the better. Tell me,” he went on, in this excited way, and raising himself up—“tell me everything. I want to know, and I *must* know everything. What did they say—what were they doing—how did she look? Ah, you won’t tell me!”

It was not, indeed, Gilbert West who was uttering these incoherencies; it was a fevered and disordered brain. Then he sank back exhausted, and they saw his wild eyes fixed hopelessly on the ceiling. The two women looked at each other, Constance despairingly, Margaret desperately; and Margaret said, between her teeth: “This is *her* work!”

“Ah!” said Constance, impatiently, “*that*

is what has driven him to this. Working on his sense of injury, inflaming him in this way. Oh, it is wrong, and sinful, and cruel, and it has ended badly !”

Margaret started and surveyed her with an infuriated astonishment. She had never more than tolerated this girl, and that simply because she saw that Gilbert liked her. But now this tone confounded her.

“Do you dare to interfere with *me*—to find fault with *me*—I, that would give my heart’s blood for him ?”

“That is nothing,” said Constance, vehemently, “if you take his. This weary struggle will kill him, and—and—*I cannot stand by and see it !*”

She stood there, trembling at her own audacity. For Margaret hitherto had been a sort of little slave, never objecting, always gently obsequious even.

“It is sinful and cruel,” she went on, trembling ; “and false, too. For I do not believe, as you would have him believe, that

this girl is so full of hatred and wickedness. She is gentle and amiable, and there has been some mistake, I know. And I warn you now to stop this cruel inflaming of his mind with suspicions. I will *not* see it done any longer !”

Margaret was stricken dumb with wonder, and could not reply for a moment. She answered differently from what might have been expected.

“ I see through all this,” she said. “ You are a mere fool ; and, I warn you, don’t think of interfering with me. What, you love my brother better than I do !—I that have given my whole life to him—that have served him like a servant, and become old and withered in mind and body ! And you—you must set up for wisdom, and talk of cruelty ! Keep out of my path, I warn you. I know what will soothe him and ease him ; and I tell you the wicked girls, women or men, shall find punishment !”

As she swept away, she seemed to have awe-struck Constance, like one of the avenging furies.

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out of the window, the same watcher saw her go up the street, deeply veiled and wrapped in a shawl.

* * * * *

The happy Dacres, having left the poor lady at home, had returned to their house, his Lulu on his arm. ' It was three o'clock. The dawn was breaking. The lamps, hanging from the cords over their street, looked pale and faded, as many of the ladies did. Father and daughter walked home together.

" I declare I feel like a colt fresh from a paddock. I could just kick over the traces, and neigh for fun. I haven't had such a night I don't know when."

Lulu was sad; she was almost thinking of taking that favourable opportunity of breaking to him what she and Vivian had determined on. Perhaps he would have received it calmly and hopefully, and said it might be for the best; where was the use of hurry? But here they were in their own house, and in the drawing-room.

“What a smash up!” he was saying, walking up. “But hush, pet, we mustn’t wake poor dear mamma; we’ve had our little enjoyment, and must let her have hers. Such a night, my dear, and that gentlemanly Trotter! Nothing could be more handsome in a Scotchman. Stood a supper—no less—best wines that Chabot could give. That’s what I like; and sang him my old song, dear. Never was in better voice. What in the name of —— is that?”

Some one was at the door; some one was coming up-stairs hurriedly, three steps at a time; some one had bounded into the room. A bright and a happy face.

“My dearest girl, such a piece of news! You know the difficulties I was talking of. Well, while I was at the ball, a letter came to my house—oh, such a joyful letter! All has passed away, and we shall be married to-morrow—to-day, if we like.”

“My own brave Vivian, I always said you were a true-hearted man—true and

bright as steel." Mr. Dacres wrung him by the hand, firmly believing he had said so—the truth being, he had often expressed the most hearty doubts as to his fidelity. "And what is all this about now?" he said, insinuatingly.

"A secret—the old secret," said Vivian, gravely, "and which I must keep to myself a little longer, unless Lucy here insists. I ought to grieve, but I cannot. I am no hypocrite."

The delighted Lucy shook her head. "No, no. It shall be yours."

"Well, this is news," said Mr. Dacres. "We'll fix to-morrow—eh? I'll see Penny at once, and have a little snug breakfast from Chabot's—eh, witch? But it's time now we were all in our beds. My legs are calling out 'bed, bed.' Harco, my boy, God Almighty bless you, my dear fellow; and you, too, Lulu, darling. That you may live to see your children's children—aye, and their children again, growing up a

blooming family about, a comfort and staff to you in your old age. Good night."

Vivian smiled at this embarrassing blessing, and Lucy laughed. They were so happy. Before they parted, she could find time to tell what they had heard about West.

"That is the only thing that disturbs me now. I fear I have been very cruel and unkind. Perhaps we have mistaken him altogether."

"In the morning," said he, "we will find all this out. Those bright eyes want their rest."

Then he went away happy, and walked across in the pale daybreak. By its light almost he could read the letter that had brought such a deliverance. It was very short. It ran :

"Sir—I am directed by Dr. Favre to inform you that Madame Marie Vivian

expired this morning at nine o'clock.
Awaiting your further instructions,

“I am, Sir, with the highest consideration,
JULES SCHMIDT.”

What a night for Vivian ! The load had been lifted from his heart—a load that had rested there since he was seventeen years old. The air cleared—the moon shone out. Above all, he had been saved—drawn back from a precipice, to the edge of which he had been hurried—hurried by a cruel and pitiless demon.

“And yet I should be grieved,” he said, half to himself, as he walked home—“in common decency. But it was no marriage. It was a vile, a shocking plot. She was not so much in fault. I can make no outward show or vulgar pretence of mourning. I should rejoice now. The chain is broken, the old slavery of fifteen long years is past, and I am free—*free* again !”

Thus this famous night in Dieppe, to this hour talked of in the colony, and in which so much had taken place, and so much more was to take place, came to an end. The day was breaking as Vivian entered his room. But he slept as a free man now.

On the next morning the great topic was the event of the night before. Harco Dacres had slept soundly all the night, and did not learn the dreadful news until the next morning.

Lucy was a little terrified, but there was now something else on her mind. Two days more, and she would have escaped. Harco, of course, was to come too, now the pressing danger had removed all scruples. She told her lover, how things stood, and the difficulty in her dear father's way. He smiled, and it was no longer a difficulty.

Gilbert West's was, perhaps, the House of the whole town, where the news was received with most indifference. Brother and sister were both now so much out

of the world, that they did not notice the agitation, the hurrying past, and the flutterings. It seemed but the ordinary fuss, in which these poor worldlings always lived. Gilbert, indeed, began to notice a strange bell, and a straight sort of bier, with men in white coats; for already, from the true love of "administering" everything, a sort of department had been created, with official uniforms: and Gilbert, too, had noticed the increased number of funerals, which began to trail across the Place. Margaret knew it all, but her soul associated it with a grim vengeance, and the terribly dramatic picture of a marriage ceremony, with the bridegroom "seized" at the very altar, and carried away.

"The vengeance of Heaven should descend on her there, without mercy, and mark her!"

The streets, during that gloomy day, were deserted. It was one of the steel-coloured Dieppe days. Now they heard a clatter, as

the Duchess, or Marquise, posted by, in their chaise, flying from the plague, the blinds down—shrinking from *him*, who might be in that, or this, very house they were passing. Horses were difficult to get. The hotels were emptying. The *Eagle* was never so crowded. Le Bœuf, gloomy and deserted, yet made short suppressed complaints. He felt he could not blame them. The worthless Blacker was shut up close—would see no one, or let no one in—fearful lest *he* might slip in with them. Ghostly times—night mares—wanderings—a ghostly atmosphere—Dieppe children even now will tell you of it with discomfort.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWO GIRLS.

AT intervals a smaller topic of interest for the colony was the event of the night before. It was canvassed in a hundred ways. It had been prophesied again and again. Every one was amused at Le Bœuf, and enjoyed the way he took his misfortune. He was talking of setting off by the evening's packet, though what good *that* pursuit would do him no one could tell. As Captain Filby said, "Thank God, sir, no saucy Frenchman would be allowed to lay his hand on an Englishman

over *there!*” But there was yet another topic.

For here was Mr. Harcourt Dacres, in better spirits, going about to a few, putting his arm affectionately about their shoulders. “My dear friend, my little girl is to have the man of her heart to-morrow. Penny, our good friend here, is to do the job—helped, of course, by the mayor. We shall have a half dozen of the elect and select to look on. Only a few: as in this time God knows what may happen! You must come.” Everyone had *that* news presently. The day and hour actually fixed. So the girl *was* actually to be married after all. We know the gentleman who was *not* asked, and who made this speech: “Well, sir, it was a long siege, and they did their best, and tried hard to bag the fellow!” We may conceive, too, the flutter in which this event found our Lucy—dress, flowers—what not. Now, indeed, all trials—and there were many—were over—happily over. She and her darling

soldier were at last to be united, and have done with their troubles. Yet one thing disturbed her—the state of West, and the curious discovery made the night before.

Her father was actually then closeted with Sir John, and had quite captivated that eccentric gentleman. Now Mr. Dacres, indeed, owned that “West’s behaviour was incomprehensible.” In the midst of all her own preparation, this image rose up before her: perhaps he had suffered more than they had known or suspected; perhaps there had been no spite or petty persecution; and now, who could tell what was his state? She had sent to make the conventional inquiries; but the messenger had seen Margaret, and come back quite scared by the cold and bitter reception of that message. “He was as well as his enemies could wish him to be.” Miss West herself looked so strange and ill.

It was while she was busy with some little preparation that her maid came to tell her

that a lady wished to see her. For a moment she thought it was Margaret, and shrank in terror from such a meeting, but presently a figure glided into the room, which she knew to be Constance. She had often seen, but had never yet met her, for Constance, from some shyness or delicacy as to her position, had kept aloof.

Lucy ran to meet her with the cordiality of a friend. "I am so glad you *have* come here. Tell me about him quickly; I am so distressed. We heard something last night, which we did not know before."

"This is all true, then," said Constance, gently, and sitting down as she was bid. "Your marriage is to take place to-morrow."

Lucy looked down. "Yes," she said, "all obstacles are to be removed at last."

"I thought so," said Constance, sadly; "and he said so. Oh, he is ill, very ill, I fear—such a night as he has gone through! Yet this morning he is up, and pacing about the room in such agitation. How is all this

to end. This one idea has taken possession of him. If something only could be done—if you would even see him.”

“Oh, I would do anything in the world. Indeed, I grieve so, especially as I find I was a little unjust to him in one thing.”

“A little!” repeated the other, sadly. “Never was any one—forgive me saying so—so cruelly misjudged. I found it only all out, within these few days. That is what has entered into his heart.”

“How! what do you mean?” said Lucy, agitated. “I now know that when he was away, he generously travelled to Scotland on papa’s business, and settled everything, but why did he act as if he had done nothing?”

“Because he was so proud, and so hurt,” said Constance, excited, “that day, that dreadful day, when he returned, and found that you had deserted him, without a word, without notice—you, for whom he was living, for whom he had gone away!”

“No!” said Lucy.

“Yes. You, who had led him on by false hopes. Why, his whole life that time—then, before, since—was planning and doing for you, and yours. Where are your father’s debts and persecutions now? Can you not guess the reason that all his harassing has ceased?”

“And that was Gilbert West? Oh,” said Lucy, clasping her hands, “what does all this mean?”

“It was for *you* he went back to his old place—though it was a trial he shrank from—had it all repaired and fitted up. But you know all this, or must have guessed it?”

“Never, never!” said Lucy, getting up to walk about. “Oh, what is to be done now? How shall I repair all this?”

“Ah! we may well ask that,” said Constance. “He is the noblest and most generous of men. Did you not see with what calm dignity he bore all those cruel suspicions—which, let me say, should not have come from *you*.”

"I know it, I know it, indeed," said Lucy, despairingly.

"About those wretched adventurers who fled last night, was he not right? You thought it was all spite, because they were friends of yours. Ah! it *was* because they were friends of yours he bore all that. And, oh, that cruel, cruel story sent round that *he*, the man who had sacrificed so much for you, would have spied on you at that little fair, and circulated scandals. You should have known *that* was false, and not believed it a second. Not a word, not a whisper, passed his lips. When I tell you that Captain Filby was there——"

"Oh, what *have* I done?" said Lucy, infinitely shocked. "Why did I not know all this before? What can I do now? Tell me."

"Nothing. It is too late now. In this dreadful place we know so little; we are so cut off from the world. I would take care. And there are such enemies abroad!"

Lucy listened wondering. She paused, then started. "Let us go to him at once. I long to see him, to beg his pardon on my knees for the way I have behaved."

"Yes, that would soothe him. I *knew* you had no idea of all this. I said so. But he was hurt and wounded. He made me promise I would not interfere. No matter how he has suffered, he will be glad to know this."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ABBE.

IT was towards the afternoon, that Doctor Macan, much pressed and hurried, and sent for from every quarter (before the day was out he was an Officer under the Administration, and could have worn a uniform if he liked or if there had been time to get it made) came rushing up-stairs to West.

“ I have just one spare moment,” he said ; “ not had time to take bit or sup to-day. Awful business all this ! But I’ve just come from that poor priest’s bed—we can’t do anything for him—*that’s* not to be expected.

It's only wonderful how he's held up so long. But I will give him an hour or so more; and, do you know what I've come for here? He says he'd like to see you *one* moment. He's afraid you are angry with him; but I told him you meant nothing."

"I meant nothing, indeed no. But what good can I do him, poor soul?"

"Every good," said the doctor. "Nothing like gratifying the fancies, and it'll do *you* no harm in the world. If you are to be hit, you *will* be. There's no contagion about it."

"Let us go then, and lose no time," said Gilbert. "Thought I was offended! Good heavens, no!"

It was nearly dark. The doctor led the way. As they went along, they met more than one messenger.

"M. le Docteur, I have just been to your house. For God's sake, come as quick as you can!"

"All right, I'll be after you now. Here,

John Darm, my friend, show this gentleman th' Abbey's house."

The gendarme saluted with deep respect. He knew the doctor was now recognized by the "Administration," and His Majesty's Government. He saw a spectral sash, or uniform, on the doctor. He led the way. It was one of the little streets at the back of the church. Gilbert could have readily found it, by the scattered few about the door. He went in. It was a neat hall, in another Abbé's house, who came out to West. West knew everybody there, and knew this clergyman.

"He is in no pain now. All that is past. Indeed, half-an-hour and he will have gone to his reward. Mon Dieu, what times! May we all die like him, though we cannot *live* like him."

"Amen," said West.

They went in. It was a modest little chamber, with a more modest little bed. *He*, the other tenant of the room, had written

his name on that face, in the usual ghastly colours. There was nothing "catching" in it. A thin hand, wasted since even the morning, was put out to him.

"How good of you," said the faint voice. "I had no right to ask you; but dying people have many privileges, and perhaps it was for your sake also——"

Gilbert sat down beside him, and spoke very kindly. He thought of the usual conventional comfort.

"My dear friend, that has been always so kind, I am not thinking of that. I do not think this a release, as it is called. I am in no hurry to depart. O, if I could only be left a *little* longer. There are so many poor people—and, only two or three, to look after them. At this moment, they are stretching out their hands to me, and I cannot go to them! O, mon Dieu! give me strength."

And he half raised himself.

As he sank back, he said :

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“This is idle. The paper is signed, and it is too late. But I have you here with me, my dear M. Vaist, and you will not be offended with me, as you were that day when I forgot that you were not one of my flock.”

“My dear friend,” said West, much troubled, “how could you think so? I declare, as I sit here, no such thought crossed my mind. It is I who should beg your pardon. But you know the state I was in, and am in.”

“Ah! that is it,” said the abbé, “now we come to it—that is what I would speak about. I am your friend. I was always interested in you—I know not why—and felt for you *here*, in my very heart of hearts. I knew your story, as I told you, that day, having heard so many of the kind. Well, well, you remember my old remedy,—‘*Laborare est orare.*’ I am afraid it failed, though.”

“I never tried it—forgive me, but I could not.”

“A pity I did not tell you this; that I tried it myself, and it did *not* fail with me. Thanks, O thanks, to heaven! Long, long, ago; and I tell you this, dear friend, to you yourself; I had fallen into some such *little* folly. Many, many years ago now. It was a young man’s passion. Things did not go well, and I thought I was undone and ruined for ever; but, happily, it turned out as it *has* done. Now, why do I tell you this? just to assure you, my little folly was *just* as deep, as miserable, as hopeless, as ever, forgive me, yours could be. But it passed by, it faded out. I used this spell—*Laborare*. So will it be with you. And then you will see what is going on about us *now*—these terrible tragedies, the young and old in agonies and dying, dropping out of the world as over the edge of a precipice.” He stopped exhausted.

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Gilbert sat down beside him, and spoke very kindly. He thought of the usual conventional comfort.

"My dear friend, that has been always so kind, I am not thinking of that. I do not think this a release, as it is called. I am in no hurry to depart. O, if I could only be left a *little* longer. There are so many poor people—and, only two or three, to look after them. At this moment, they are stretching out their hands to me, and I cannot go to them! O, mon Dieu! give me strength."

And he half raised himself.

As he sank back, he said :

I.I.

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“This is idle. The paper is signed, and it is too late. But I have you here with me, my dear M. Vaist, and you will not be offended with me, as you were that day when I forgot that you were not one of my flock.”

“My dear friend,” said West, much troubled, “how could you think so? I declare, as I sit here, no such thought crossed my mind. It is I who should beg your pardon. But you know the state I was in, and am in.”

“Ah! that is it,” said the abbé, “now we come to it—that is what I would speak about. I am your friend. I was always interested in you—I know not why—and felt for you *here*, in my very heart of hearts. I knew your story, as I told you, that day, having heard so many of the kind. Well, well, you remember my old remedy,—‘*Laborare est orare.*’ I am afraid it failed, though.”

“I never tried it—forgive me, but I could not.”

“A pity I did not tell you this; that I tried it myself, and it did *not* fail with me. Thanks, O thanks, to heaven! Long, long, ago; and I tell you this, dear friend, to you yourself; I had fallen into some such *little* folly. Many, many years ago now. It was a young man’s passion. Things did not go well, and I thought I was undone and ruined for ever; but, happily, it turned out as it *has* done. Now, why do I tell you this? just to assure you, my little folly was *just* as deep, as miserable, as hopeless, as ever, forgive me, yours could be. But it passed by, it faded out. I used this spell—*Laborare*. So will it be with you. And then you will see what is going on about us *now*—these terrible tragedies, the young and old in agonies and dying, dropping out of the world as over the edge of a precipice.” He stopped exhausted.

"Then, believe me, this little disappointment, this *misère de salon*, will look very trifling indeed!"

"Just think, my dear M. Vaist," and the Abbé whispered again, "of these poor words of mine: your life is too good, your heart too noble, to be wasted in a poor, suffering dream of this sort. O! if I could make you believe all this! O, that God would give eloquence—words of fire! But no——"

Doctor Macan now came in softly, and whispered to West:

"Better go now—it is not far off."

It seemed so: for the eyes seemed growing fixed, and the face pallid. Still West saw the lips moving, and distinctly heard the words, "*laborare est orare.*" The Doctor put his hand on the Abbé's limbs.

"Ay, here it comes," he said, half to himself, "the cold's mounting; steady now."

"Enough now, M. L'Abbé," said the doctor. "I think that'll do, my dear friend," for the dying Abbé was making the

same effort to rise he had done before with West, with the indistinct notion of going out to his people.

His eyes were growing more fixed, his lips moving very rapidly, his hands clasped. It was the old immemorial routine, ever-renewing—and ever will recur. * * *

* * * * *

As they both walked out softly, after “all was over,”—the conventional phrase for “all beginning,”—Doctor Macan gave him an epitaph: “as good a man as ever put on a gown!” When he was gone, West, left standing there under the sky, found that curious phrase come back, “*petit misère de salon.*” *Drawing-room* misery, indeed. The whole scene had gone to his soul—the gentle pleading—the strange similarity of their cases—and as he thought of the one who had so fought and triumphed—and then of his own ignominious struggle—of his hopeless mauling—his *personal* sufferings—*selfish*,

ignoble—he felt something of *shame* at his own humiliation. Then the wheezy bell of the old St. Jacques, close by, began to toll—not unmusically—telling the news, that its most faithful servant was then on his journey; and in its quick notes he seemed to hear a song, “*Laborare est orare.*”

CHAPTER XIX.

FORGIVEN AND FORGOTTEN.

DOCTOR MACAN had been fetched with all speed—for the disastrous news had gone about, that the sacred English, who had now escaped for nearly twenty-four hours, had been attached. This was indeed a shock. Now was heard, “*Poor Old Filby! He’s booked!*” with much shaking of heads and throwing up of eyes, as who should say that the “booking” was the beginning of a very serious business for the captain. One said, ‘What! the old blasphemer caught at last!’ Yes, the old captain had been

surprised, and was lying on his back in his cheap apartments, in the agonies of the malady. As Doctor Macan told afterwards “the mother that bore him wouldn’t have known him;” which she hardly would under any conditions; the captain’s knocking about, and intemperance in many ways, having much changed his appearance. Neither Mr. Blacker, nor Harcourt Dacres, nor any of his friends who had seen him in his pink under-waistcoat at the ball, only a few hours before, would have known him. The “brandy” face was shrunken and hollow, and nearly blue—the teeth chattering. There was no one to come and see him, or sit by him; though in the intensity of his sufferings he poured out some strong maledictions on his desertion.

The “old reprobate” made but a short battle—three hours “did the work.”

That strange wicked life—a wicked, graceless old man’s life—was now to close. Selfish, querulous, coarse, cruel, merciless,

pitiless himself, he could reasonably expect no sympathy or pity—and about five o'clock that evening, with the steel-grey clouds of Dieppe settling down slowly, the cold began to steal up his wicked old limbs—to stiffen the lips that, even then, were muttering execrations at his agony—and with the *bonne* standing at the door in terror, half inclined to fly, yet fascinated by the horror of the spectacle—the old sinner foamed and grumbled himself out of this world into—well, into another.

Mr. Penny said the usual prayers.

This was the beginning of the famous epidemic. Strange to say, after this first victim, no other English seemed required for the present; and the whole of that night went over, without any one being touched. This was more remarkable as the mere natives were being swept off wholesale. At six o'clock, the Mayor received news that the *Juge de Paix* was ill—an hour later, that the commander of the mili-

tary was lying stricken at the barracks. Who knows? the Maire's turn might come at any moment.

Gilbert West had returned home in a new mood. Anything was a change from the old state. The picture of the death-bed was before his eyes, and shut out other pictures. His soul was in a tumult.

As he was going along, with a lighter step, and certainly with more of a purpose in his mind than ever he had had before, he heard a soft step behind him. Some one was running to overtake him. He certainly could never have dreamed of *that* visitant now before him, clasping his hand in both hers, and with tears streaming from her soft eyes.

“Lucy! *You!*”

There was nothing harsh in his voice. With that surprising instinct which comes in situations that are intensely dramatic, he knew all—knew what she was about to tell. It was in her repentant and even loving face,

and in her first broken word: "Can you ever forgive?"

She was beside him, pouring out all her explanation, her ignorance of what Constance had told her. But, alas! she could not explain away the great act, she was about to undertake.

"Now," she said, "I know your nobleness and generosity. It has overpowered and humiliated me. I see how much you are above me. And had I known all this in time——"

"No matter now," he said gently, "it was my folly and stupidity."

"No," said Lucy, eagerly, "but my dull incapability of appreciating *your* delicacy. I took everything literally. I thought, when you went away, that you meant me, *really*, to decide for myself, and if I did *not* find that I was growing to like and love you, that you yourself would not be content. I declare solemnly that this was what was in my mind. I was a foolish school-girl then, and

took everything au pied de la lettre. Then there was this storm, and the saving of the sailors, and I was——”

“You were dazzled. Most natural. And then I could add, I suppose, that I was not young enough to dazzle, and too sober. *There was the mistake.*”

“No, no,” she said, passionately; “that had *nothing* to do with it. You must not think that. When you went away, I solemnly looked forward to being happy with you. I was sure of it. But then, when you returned, and they told me what seemed to me cruel and unkind things—you know I am a little quick in temper—I thought I would defend myself——”

“You should not have believed them,” he said, gently. “You might have known me better. I your enemy! Oh, Heavens!”

“Yes; I should not have thought so. I was foolish and childish.”

“And your head was full of this other brilliant man. Well,” he said, sadly, “this

is only the old, old story. Yet I cannot tell you what comfort it is to me to hear all this—that there has been some misconception, and that this has not been from dislike.”

“Oh! and you must get well, and strong, and be cheerful and happy again. For what am I,” added Lucy, in her vehement way, “to cause any trouble or grief to any one—an untrained, uninformed, and, I am afraid, selfish school-girl, with no gifts of any kind? It is ridiculous. I am not worth any fuss. And now, if you will only let me see you, and know you, and like you, as we did of old, if you will only let me strive to repair what I have done, or seemed to do, and show you how deeply, sincerely, I have always loved you—will you? And we shall be so happy, one day.”

She looked at him wistfully, and with such pleading eyes, as she made this request, that something like hope and peace seemed to come into his. He was about to speak, with the old smile on his lips, when Lucy heard a

sound, and looking round, saw with affright the tall, grim figure standing behind them. They were now almost at his door.

“So you come to him now, with this soft story, and soft promises, now that you have done all this mischief, and worked his ruin. Leave this! Do not listen to her wicked words. And I tell you this besides, Lucy Dacres, it will not help you or save you. Such heathenish and wicked cruelty is not to be passed by, without punishment. Vengeance will come, sooner or later, never fear.”

Lucy looked frightened, and shrank away.

“Hush Margaret,” said he, angrily. “There is no need of speaking in that way. No one wants vengeance here. We have been both victims of a mistake.”

It would be hard to describe Margaret’s scornful laugh.

“So she has been talking to you on the eve of her marriage. She wishes to leave all smooth, and leave everything happily settled

behind her by a few soft words. But it will not do—it will not do. Take care, take care, Lucy Dacres! and I tell you, you shall not escape.”

There was so much menace, so much of prophecy that might be fulfilled, it struck a chill to Lucy's heart.

“What do you mean?” she said, trembling. “I have done you no harm, and meant no harm.”

“Hush,” said he, kindly. “All will be well. Margaret's love for me makes her judge severely of every one. Now, dear Lucy, I will not keep you any longer. You have taken a load off my heart by your words, and have shown me that I was a little foolish. Every wish and prayer for happiness attend you!”

Again Margaret laughed. “Heaven will not join in that blessing. But we shall see.”

CHAPTER XX.

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WHEN Lucy had flown away, not a little disturbed by Margaret's look of hate, Gilbert went in with his sister. He was struck with the strange change in her face, and spoke to her kindly.

"I have come from such a scene," he said to her, in a low voice, "and there will be many such scenes, I fear, going on about us."

He had noted the strained and restless manner of his sister. She did not answer his speech.

“So it is fixed for the morning,” she said. “You have heard *that*. They are determined to go on with it; let them. With these scenes going on about them it is indecent. But they will bring down judgment on themselves—never fear—trust to me, Gilbert; I promise you *that*.”

She spoke with a sort of exultation. There was a silence for a moment; then he answered, softly,—

“My dear Margaret, I want to speak to you very seriously. You know what has gone on for these past weeks, and months. You have seen the spectacle of my humiliation, and infatuation, as I may call it, and I know how it has distressed and affected you——”

“It was not your fault,” she interrupted. “Do not think it, Gilbert. I never thought so, nor blamed you. We have suffered, God knows, but you were not accountable. Those who are, will be punished, never fear. It is coming—coming—fast enough.”

“No, no !” said he, gently. “Nothing is coming. I want no one punished, not her certainly, poor child ! Child indeed ! I am afraid if we were to decide who has been the child in this matter——Oh ! when I think, Margaret, of what I have seen to-night, and the scenes about us, and of the great business of life—the hours wasted so selfishly on my own sorrows—I feel ashamed and humiliated, Margaret. What I would wish now is, to make some attempt, and shake off this old folly, which has held me so long, and I look to you, Margaret, and to Constance to aid me.”

Constance had just entered. She clapped her hands with delight.

“O Gilbert, Gilbert ! what news this is. We shall begin to live again.”

Long after Gilbert West recalled that burst of delight—the light of joy that was in her face. But Margaret was looking

at him, with a strange gaze of anger and contempt.

“Where have you come from?” she said. “Indeed, after your stooping to go to her again——”

“No,” he said. “But we must change all this. I feel no enmity to her. She has acted as was natural. I ought to have known from the beginning. Others could see nothing beyond mere regard between us. You told me so yourself.”

Margaret had risen, and was pacing the room pensively.

“That is all well for you. But the injury she has done me—the misery she has caused me! No I cannot treat it in that way. It was sport to *her*, I dare say, but death to others. It suits you now, in the humour you are, to treat it lightly. You think nothing of what *I* have suffered for you—the agony of three weeks past—which has

changed all my life. You don't care for *that* ; but a few sweet words from a heartless girl, that has been laughing at you, making you her plaything, is enough for you. A smile of hers is worth my life ! God forgive you, Gilbert ! I will not pass it by—I cannot. The arm of vengeance will pursue her, and will reach her all the same."

"My dear Margaret," he said, calmly ; "why do you talk in this way, and add to what we have already ? I tell you I *wish* to shut out what is past—to have done with it for ever, and try and start again—and yet you will not help me."

"I know what that means," she went on in the same tone. "You have found a new path—take it then, Gilbert—but it is unkind and cruel of you. You never felt for me as I feel for you, I, whose heart has bled for you—bled—bled for this folly, as you call it. You have no sympathy for *me* ! Never mind ! perhaps you are weary of me,

and as you would take a new course, then take it without me, with all my heart. I little thought *this* was in store for me to-night——”

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Again she interrupted him :

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was upright and honourable, though violent and fitful—and in time all her natural resentment would pass by. He was indeed responsible for it: it was his behaviour—his wrongs that had worked her into that state—had inflamed her sorrow. Poor Margaret! in that cold iron heart of hers, as it was supposed to be, was a glowing fire of affection for *him*, and whatever was her mood, he should be tender and indulgent.

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to Southampton, where he would catch the *Duchess of Kent*, sailing on the fatal day. It was a time of union and separation, of sorrow and of joy. Yet everything had come about, at last, in the happiest and most convenient way. All was well, because ending well, and because thought not likely to end well. Mr. Dacres was going to do "the handsome thing," singing as he went :

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with infinite warmth. The handsome thing was a visit, an amende, to "poor West." Margaret saw him come in, and went past with a smile described by Mr. Dacres as sufficient "to sour a gallon of milk." Then he went off gaily "to charter," as he called it, the Rev. Mr. Penny, who was delighted "to have the job." Then he had to see "Shabbow, the restywrong," about the little things for breakfast. That night, as Lucy went to rest, she found on her table a very

pretty case—a bracelet, the handsomest the colony could furnish—very costly. (Alas! it had been made to Mr. Ernest Beaufort's order, a present for Mrs. Wilkinson, and had been left on the poor ruined jeweller's hands.) And inside the case was a little piece of paper, with the inscription, "A reconciliation present." It had been chosen by Constance. Constance had, however, other work on hand. She was pursued, haunted, by the impression that Margaret was at the bottom of all this coming and apparent happiness. There was no mistaking her calm acquiescence and her confident acceptance of the situation—the cold triumph with which she spoke of the morrow's marriage.

"She has to do with it; she has brought it about with some wicked end, I know. She means ruin by it. She has some dreadful scheme on foot. If it destroys them, it will destroy Gilbert. If I could only find out! But there is no time—there is no time."

There was very little indeed. The lamps were dangling in the streets, and lighted; a café or two was filling. Margaret scarcely spoke; but seemed almost to suspect her. Yet she had a bitter and coldly triumphant look—a vein of confidence which excited suspicion.

That was a troubled night for the gentle Constance. A tremendous responsibility seemed to have been laid on her shoulders; she hardly knew what to do. She had spoken to Margaret with a sort of hint, but that woman, strangely changed—as indeed was every one during these days—had met her with an almost fierce warning.

“What do you mean? Beware of interfering with *me*! Take care what you are about!”

Constance answered her, calmly: “I do not wish to interfere with you. But you surely would not do anything that would make your brother’s life miserable for ever, and yourself wretched!”

Margaret looked at her darkly. "What do you mean? what are you hinting at? Take care, Constance, I warn you again. But you can do nothing. Do your best and worst."

Constance, thinking it over after, could not but associate that late expedition of Margaret's with the joyful news which had made everything smooth. This she was convinced of. And yet she could do nothing, think of nothing. And that night closed in, and all Dieppe slept.

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pretty case—a bracelet, the handsomest the colony could furnish—very costly. (Alas! it had been made to Mr. Ernest Beaufort's order, a present for Mrs. Wilkinson, and had been left on the poor ruined jeweller's hands.) And inside the case was a little piece of paper, with the inscription, "A reconciliation present." It had been chosen by Constance. Constance had, however, other work on hand. She was pursued, haunted, by the impression that Margaret was at the bottom of all this coming and apparent happiness. There was no mistaking her calm acquiescence and her confident acceptance of the situation—the cold triumph with which she spoke of the morrow's marriage.

"She has to do with it; she has brought it about with some wicked end, I know. She means ruin by it. She has some dreadful scheme on foot. If it destroys them, it will destroy Gilbert. If I could only find out! But there is no time—there is no time."

There was very little indeed. The lamps were dangling in the streets, and lighted; a café or two was filling. Margaret scarcely spoke; but seemed almost to suspect her. Yet she had a bitter and coldly triumphant look—a vein of confidence which excited suspicion.

That was a troubled night for the gentle Constance. A tremendous responsibility seemed to have been laid on her shoulders; she hardly knew what to do. She had spoken to Margaret with a sort of hint, but that woman, strangely changed—as indeed was every one during these days—had met her with an almost fierce warning.

“What do you mean? Beware of interfering with *me*! Take care what you are about!”

Constance answered her, calmly: “I do not wish to interfere with you. But you surely would not do anything that would make your brother’s life miserable for ever, and yourself wretched!”

Margaret looked at her darkly. "What do you mean? what are you hinting at? Take care, Constance, I warn you again. But you can do nothing. Do your best and worst."

Constance, thinking it over after, could not but associate that late expedition of Margaret's with the joyful news which had made everything smooth. This she was convinced of. And yet she could do nothing, think of nothing. And that night closed in, and all Dieppe slept.

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Happy morning, too, for Vivian ; trouble that had been at his heart for months, and even years—the trial of his life—it was all passed away. A new era was beginning. He had thought he had been shipwrecked for ever ; but was now saved—saved for light, and joy, and happiness. Never had Madame Jaques and her female friends thought the handsome colonel—of whom they were such passionate admirers—looking so splendid. That sort of soft interest that was always in his face—that air of a gentleman, which made him courteous and respectful to all about him, contrasted with the bearing of some of their countrymen, had quite attracted them. The night before, he had quite won Madame Jaques for ever by a present of a little brooch of some value. That lady, without any impeachment of her attachment to her husband, actually wept over this little present.

Bright day ! Sun out. Many Frenchmen lounging about the little street, yet with delicacy, and not staring obtrusively. All the English were gone up to the church to have a grand, solid stare, those who were not bidden being loud in their disgust and anger.

It is now nearly ten o'clock, and Harco, splendid in the blue swallow-tail coat, has gone forth, leading his daughter, bright, blushing, richly-coloured little flower, to the distinguished carriage of the colony. They are going off to the English chapel, where a few friends only have been invited—Mrs. Dalrymple, her daughters, Mr. Blacker, and some more of “the decent sort.” No one thinks of the plague now. Mr. Penny, a little nervous, is ready waiting to emerge in his robes. The sun is shining. The bells of the place are ringing. They are waiting for the bridegroom, the splendid Colonel Vivian.

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“But you must, Gilbert. I must speak for myself, and I have little time. What you said last night, do you know, struck me deeply. If I had had time, or this had not come on me—But it was affection—all affection for you—indeed it was, and I would have gone through with it—I would, indeed, at all risks, even facing what I am now in presence of, and—what is coming, but you deserted me, Gilbert. As you have done so—but I suppose you were right.”

“Indeed, I know how you loved me all through,” said Gilbert, warmly, “and what you have suffered for me.”

“That is nothing,” she said, “though if you knew what I *have* done, and meant to do, I daresay that love of yours, Gilbert, would not endure. You will look back

yet with repugnance and terror to your sister's memory."

"Now, dearest, do not disquiet yourself with these thoughts. I tell you it is all over. There—dismiss it from your mind."

"Yes, you will, though," she went on; "all because I pursued that girl—because I could not like her, and laid out a scheme of vengeance, that was to punish her signally, and *make her rue* what she had done to you."

Gilbert started, and looked at her uneasily.

"Ah! there!" said she, pointing with her trembling finger. "I see it in your face. I was right. But you need not fear. There is yet time. Oh! Gilbert, I must tell you—and it is humiliating for me, but I am not ashamed of it—what I have done. That man Vivian, I discovered, is—*married!*"

“*What, Married!*” replied Gilbert, starting.

“Yes. His wife is alive—*is* alive.”

“Alive!” repeated West, and turned instantly to the door. “Take care—”

“Do not be afraid,” she said. “There is still time—”

“But they are to be married—now—soon—Are you serious? Are you sure, Margaret? Take care!”

“That is not all. I told you you would not look back to my memory with affection or regard—” She half raised herself. “I say, do you know why they are to be married to-day? Listen. It was I who sent them the news of *her death!*”

“O Margaret, Margaret! What have you done? Good God! what shall we do?”

“What have I done!” she went on, speaking rapidly. “What I have done—what I have done, was all *for you*. You must not reproach me. It was I who did it.

I wrote the letter. They fell into the trap. And I tell you, Gilbert, had not this come upon me, you would have been well avenged. Now you are indifferent—you do not care. Neither do I. The end has come. It is not worth while leaving such a legacy behind.”

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He rushed from the room.

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Happy morning, too, for Vivian ; trouble that had been at his heart for months, and even years—the trial of his life—it was all passed away. A new era was beginning. He had thought he had been shipwrecked for ever ; but was now saved—saved for light, and joy, and happiness. Never had Madame Jaques and her female friends thought the handsome colonel—of whom they were such passionate admirers—looking so splendid. That sort of soft interest that was always in his face—that air of a gentleman, which made him courteous and respectful to all about him, contrasted with the bearing of some of their countrymen, had quite attracted them. The night before, he had quite won Madame Jaques for ever by a present of a little brooch of some value. That lady, without any impeachment of her attachment to her husband, actually wept over this little present.

Bright day ! Sun out. Many Frenchmen lounging about the little street, yet with delicacy, and not staring obtrusively. All the English were gone up to the church to have a grand, solid stare, those who were not bidden being loud in their disgust and anger.

It is now nearly ten o'clock, and Harco, splendid in the blue swallow-tail coat, has gone forth, leading his daughter, bright, blushing, richly-coloured little flower, to the distinguished carriage of the colony. They are going off to the English chapel, where a few friends only have been invited—Mrs. Dalrymple, her daughters, Mr. Blacker, and some more of “the decent sort.” No one thinks of the plague now. Mr. Penny, a little nervous, is ready waiting to emerge in his robes. The sun is shining. The bells of the place are ringing. They are waiting for the bridegroom, the splendid Colonel Vivian.

* * * * *

Vivian, a little late, as he feels, is making some few last preparations, putting up something forgotten, so as to have nothing on his mind. He has just risen to get his hat, when some one, pale, tottering, and agitated, comes in and says: "Thank God, I have found you here, and am in time!"

"Mr. West," said Vivian, in surprise, "what does this mean?"

Well might he ask, seeing the pale, worn, and almost fainting object before him, for whom this exertion might have been too much.

"I know not what you will think of me, but it is for the best, I do this, and it may turn out nothing, after all. But for *her*—for your sake, I ask one question—only one. Think me childish, suspicious, morbid, if you will——"

"Certainly," said Vivian, quickly, yet uneasily. "Lucy has told me all, and I know your interest in her——"

“Have you received any letter from Paris within the last two nights?”

Vivian started, coloured. A presentiment of his old trouble coming back seemed to be gaining on him. “What does this mean? Ah! there is the clock, and I am late. Later we will talk of this. They are waiting. Let me go, please.”

“Then you *do* know something?” said West. “Ah, take care—take care! Let them wait. Oh, you know not what may depend on this—ruin, misery, that can never be repaired. For her sake wait a moment”—Vivian was going—“or I shall have to follow, and speak before them all.”

“Speak now, then,” said Vivian, excitedly. “What is all this?”

“It is this. If you received any paper like *that*, and on its news, have ventured on this step, I tell you, I solemnly believe that letter was written in this town, *and never came from where it affected to come.*”

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"Certain
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"Alive!" repeated West, and turned instantly to the door. "Take care—"

"Do not be afraid," she said. "There is still time—"

"But they are to be married—now—soon—Are you serious? Are you sure, Margaret? Take care!"

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"O Margaret, Margaret! What have you done? Good God! what shall we do?"

"What have I done!" she went on, speaking rapidly. "What I have done—what I have done, was all *for you*. You must not reproach me. It was I who did it.

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“Listen, Gilbert—”

“Now, dearest Margaret, I cannot—you *must* not—”

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“Indeed, I know how you loved me all through,” said Gilbert, warmly, “and what you have suffered for me.”

“That is nothing,” she said, “though if you knew what I *have* done, and meant to do, I daresay that love of yours, Gilbert, would not endure. You will look back

yet with regret and sorrow to his sister's memory."

"Now, dearest, I will leave myself with these thoughts. I am tired. It is all over. There—fare you well from my mind."

"Yes, you will, though," he said to her. "all because I pursued that ~~girl~~—~~because~~ I could not like her, and had not a sense of vengeance, that was to give me a signally, and *make her* what was done to you."

Gilbert started, and looked at her so easily.

"Ah! there!" said she, pointing to her trembling finger. "I see it in your face. I was right. But you need not say. There is yet time. He ~~shall~~ ~~shall~~ tell you—and it is ~~unpleasant~~ ~~unpleasant~~. I am not ashamed of ~~it~~—~~what~~ ~~what~~. That man Vivan, I ~~remember~~ ~~remember~~ *ried!*"

“Listen, Gilbert—”

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE WEDDING DAY.

THE morning had now come round, bright and gay, in strange contrast to the dismal scenes going on in the colony. West was still asleep—dreaming. It was about six o'clock when he heard a knocking at his door, which roused him. He started up—the bright crystal-built palaces of dream-land faded out, like a Christmas transformation scene, dissolving into the night again.

He heard a voice at the door—an

agitated voice. "O, Monsieur, get up. She is ill—poor Mademoiselle."

These words roused him. He was up and dressed in a moment—scared—alarmed. To be ill in those days was to be ill to death. He was at the door. "Is it dangerous? What is it? Send for the doctor without a moment's delay."

"Oh, sir," said the girl, "he is coming—and I fear, it is *it*!"

West was in Margaret's room in a moment. Alas! there could be no mistake—the grim ogre, stalking about, had arbitrarily chosen another victim. The work of his fingers was there—on the face—the ghastly look which soon grew but too familiar—of contortion and convulsion.

"Oh, Margaret!" he cried, all but wringing his hands at this new sorrow. And this was a commentary on what he had thought last night, and of the hint of the dying Abbé—that beside these real griefs, incident to mortal life, love-lorn sorrows dwindling

down of a sudden, seem as a child's grief over the breaking of its top.

Constance was there, pale and agitated; and here was the rehabilitated Macan, who had hardly got an hour's sleep, just looking in, by hurried express—and snatched from his breakfast. Whenever Dr. Macan, in later and happier times, talked of that “awful visitation of 183—,” there were people of the Filby sort ready to wink and say, after he had left the room, “Did you hear the old hypocrite? Why he blesses the day it came!”

He had even now, alas! experience enough to have some skill in the malady, and, looking at Margaret, he shook his head, and whispered to West:

“My poor boy, I'll do what I can. But we can only just soothe, and stave off the pain.”

Margaret's grim features relaxed.

“I can't hear you,” she said. “But I know what you mean. I am not afraid,

and have learned never to be afraid of death. I did not think it would be so soon. Gilbert, dear, tell me about *that*. Is not this—the day—this the morning?”

It seemed to him that her voice had softened—that her manner had grown gentle. There was a nervous restlessness about her. Gilbert soothed her.

“You must keep quiet, dearest. Don’t think of those things—that is all at an end now.”

She started, and half raised herself.

“No! no! surely not—not so early as this.?”

“No, no,” said he, in the same tone. “I mean, to-day will see it all over. Don’t think of it any more.”

The doctor promising to return in an hour or so, her gaunt eyes eagerly followed him.

“What o’clock is it now?” she said, hurriedly.

“Past eight.”

“Listen, Gilbert—”

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“It is this. If you received any paper like *that*, and on its news, have ventured on this step, I tell you, I solemnly believe that letter was written in this town, *and never came from where it affected to come.*”

“*What!*” cried Vivian, turning pale, “and has your wretched malignity ventured on this? O God, help me! God help us all! What is to be done now!”

“Then it is true? I knew it. No, no, as I have a soul, I know nothing of it. I did not do it, nor can I dare to tell you who did. O Vivian! That letter is a forgery.”

Vivian had sunk down aghast, trembling. He wanted no proofs, no details. He saw it all too plain. He could only repeat, “What *is* to be done! My God, what is to be done! They are waiting—they are ready! It will kill her!”

At this moment they heard steps on the stairs, and Mr. Blacker entered—express.

“My dear colonel, we are all there—all waiting. The mayor in his place; and the consul has just come in. I just ran up to give you a hint. Why, what’s—the matter? And Mr. West *here!*”

Vivian did not answer, but looked at him with a dull stare.

“He is not well,” said West, hurriedly, “but will be better in a moment. Go back, do you hear, and tell them he will be there in a moment.”

“Not well! Good gracious!” said Mr. Blacker, really confounded. “This is all very odd. I’d better get Macan in, or——”

“Go back to them at once,” said Gilbert, angrily, “or *I* shall.”

“Oh, certainly,” said Mr. Blacker, alarmed. He did not wish to lose the charge of so important a piece of news, and set off with alacrity.

* * * * *

Lucy, in the vestry, on her father’s arm, was waiting, with a fluttering heart. There was to be a little procession. The rest were in the chapel. The mayor was there in the front seat, now growing a little impatient. Mr. Dempsey, on whom the late Captain Filby’s mantle had already fallen, was heard saying humorously:

“If the tide served for the *Eagle* this

morning, I'd say the colonel had given them all the slip. There's a chaise to be had still in Dieppe. Wouldn't it be fun? It'd be as good as Drury Lane; the whole party waiting here, cooling themselves. Why, here's old Blacker, going off after him! There's something up!"

Mr. Blacker came back, with wonder and surprise and importance so plainly mixed up in his face, that Mr. Dempsey said almost aloud:

"I know there's something wrong."

Then he saw Mr. Dacres, with a look of impatience on his face, again come posting out of the vestry, and hurry down out of the chapel. The mayor rose with dignity, and went into the vestry. Mr. Dempsey, scarcely able to restrain his indecent raptures, said, this time aloud:

"He has slipped off, after all!"

* * * *

"What is to be done?" said Vivian, frantically. "What! except I take that

pistol, and shoot myself. How can I tell them? Oh, the disgrace, the mortification! It will kill her. And my baseness and treachery! Oh, it was infamous! I should not have concealed it. And yet I was not so guilty. I was a boy, only seventeen, and fell into the hands of this wretched French family. I never saw her since, and for fifteen years I have been in that slavery. Now, I thought I was free. I could not grieve, I could only rejoice. Tell me what is to be done?"

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It is now nearly ten o'clock, and Harco, splendid in the blue swallow-tail coat, has gone forth, leading his daughter, bright, blushing, richly-coloured little flower, to the distinguished carriage of the colony. They are going off to the English chapel, where a few friends only have been invited—Mrs. Dalrymple, her daughters, Mr. Blacker, and some more of “the decent sort.” No one thinks of the plague now. Mr. Penny, a little nervous, is ready waiting to emerge in his robes. The sun is shining. The bells of the place are ringing. They are waiting for the bridegroom, the splendid Colonel Vivian.

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"Mr. West," said Vivian, in surprise, "what does this mean?"

Well might he ask, seeing the pale, worn, and almost fainting object before him, for whom this exertion might have been too much.

"I know not what you will think of me, but it is for the best, I do this, and it may turn out nothing, after all. But for *her*—for your sake, I ask one question—only one. Think me childish, suspicious, morbid, if you will——"

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cited, and rehearsed his service carefully, in which he had grown not a little rusty. Mrs. Jaques was in a flutter. Even the fish-women knew of it; and some of the younger ones came with a handsome bouquet, to Lucy's infinite delight and confusion. And this compliment was in these days a simple and genuine one, and not of the mere theatrical and mercenary sort which it would be now. Lucy herself, charming in her bridal dress, glowing with pride and fluttering with happiness, scarcely knowing what she did or said, looking the prettiest girl Dieppe had ever seen go up to the altar. No wonder, too, she was happy, for *Gallynan*, the faithful newspaper, in its latest impression, had a scrap of news to the effect of a rumour that the East Indian disturbance had been quelled on the spot. It was a mere vague story, but it meant hope. The dreadful scourge in the town had been forgotten for an hour or two. Harco was going about as wild as a young colt, bursting out

of the house every five minutes, express, in a new bright blue coat, with gilt buttons, made on the French model then in fashion. He was overflowing with song, and love, and gallantry.

“Mrs. Jacks, the happiest day of our lives, this is! You look as blooming, my dear, as the flowers of May. Ah; but mon cher Jacks knew what he was about, when he chose *you*.”

Then he broke into his favourite strain :

“The light of her eyes
That mirrors the skies,”

with an addition which even Lucy had not heard before :

“Ah, exquisite bliss,
To ravish a kiss,
And rifle the rose,
On his bosom that glows !”

And pretty Mrs. Jaques was not at all displeased at these compliments. Shabow, too, had done his part. A charming little

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He was a quick intelligent man.

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passed off, has it not? And I think, Dr. Adams, he is well enough now. We have kept them waiting long enough."

The bewildered Mr. Dacres was looking from one to the other. "He could not understand it at all, at all." He did not speak, but followed mechanically as West, Vivian, and the doctor hurried down stairs.

Poor Lucy, pale and trembling, no longer a blooming rose-bud, but a snowy lily, was ready to sink as the moments of suspense drew on. Hark to the steps and rustle. "Here he is! here he is!" She had faith in him all through, and, what was more, in his bright hopeful face she read no doubt, or alarm, or misgiving, but joy and hope.

Even Mr. Dempsey, disappointed, could make out no sign of reluctance. Out came the little procession. Mr. Dacres, who had never spoken, was the only one with an air of confusion in his face. Then Mr. Penny addressed himself to his work. The English

stood on the benches, to get a good view. The bride looked lovely, delicious; the colonel "noble and beautiful." They were a handsome pair. There, it was done. They were Colonel Vivian and Mrs. Vivian at last. So does there come an end for all trials and troubles.

No one in the colony ever solved that curious delay. Mr. Dacres, himself, was greatly puzzled by the mysterious sickness, but he was too sensible a man to give any trouble, now that things had turned out so well. He was too full of benediction and genial happiness, and presided at the little breakfast, giving toasts à l'Anglaise. It was charming to see our dear girl seated there beside her husband—the man of her heart, in the old conventional phrase, and the man of her choice. A bright, bright day.

"Ah! dear," she whispered to Vivian, "poor Gilbert! if he only were here!"

Gilbert had gone home. The events of

that morning had been a little beyond his strength, still there was a wonderful change in him. He could not bring himself to look on at the marriage, but went home. He had his own sorrow to hurry back to. This last adventure had excited him marvelously.

He was met at the door by Constance.

“O, Gilbert,” she said, “where have you been? Come quick!”

As he entered the room, the dull eyes lighted. The old grim smile came back.

“Too late!” she faltered. “You were too late, Gilbert,” she repeated eagerly, “yet I told you in time.”

“No, Margaret, you have been saved!”

The old nature was not to be so easily worsted. A shade—it might have been the shadow of the great enemy—seemed to spread slowly over the thin face. It was the herald of that impatient and deadly grasp. Once he seized his prey, it was all over.

EPILOGUE.

FIVE years after the scene just related.

We are at the opposite coast, at a charming house close to Dover, with the sea—the *English* sea—and the great white cliffs below. On clear days the place of banishment could be made out. The colony was going on as usual. The scourge had been forgotten. It had grown gayer even. House rents had risen. More fashionables were coming every year. Le Bœuf had added a wing to the Royal. The Blacker stick still took its usual exercises in the way of flourishing. The old round was going on.

In the pretty house near Dover, it was about nine o'clock of a summer's evening.

The dinner was just over, and two gentlemen were sitting there, drinking their claret. It was a Saturday night.

“Now, I hope,” said the gentleman of the house, warmly, “that *this* is only to be a beginning; at *least*, every Saturday we shall look for you, so long as we are here. You can pack up the odious briefs, and be back by the coach on Tuesday. That is to be a fixed arrangement, is it not? My dear West, now that I know you and value you, there is no one I should wish to see so much of.”

“Business, dreadful business,” said the other, smiling, “which I have foolishly gone back to. I am afraid——”

“What, carrying out that poor priest’s ‘*laborare est orare*,’ as you told me. That is not the sense he meant it in. He would come back from his grave to reprove you. See what I have done, West; given up the dear army to please Lucy.

The two gentlemen talked a great deal together.

"It is so curious to me," said Vivian, "to think, as I go out of a morning, of that place opposite, and that Fate should have set me down here in front of it, as it were. What a deal we went through, *both* of us—all of us." West could think,—could talk of those days *now* without trouble.

"A strange story of a mistake and folly," he said, quietly.

"Do you remember the flurry of these last days—that *last* morning? What a crisis. It seems like a dream now. You talk of folly, my dear West; but I have often speculated what could you have been thinking of me, and my strange behaviour? Well, I suffered enough, and if I did commit folly I atoned for it. I must tell you, as we are friends now, West, and, indeed, you have a little right to know——"

"My dear Vivian," said the other, "not

I. I am a lawyer, and can guess at least enough that will do for me."

"Well, what do you think, as a mere matter of curiosity?"

"Some designing Frenchmen, and their family. You, a boy, a child. The daughter was——"

"I see, you know enough. I was, indeed, a child; she was double my age. I fell ill in a strange, solitary French town. These people got me into their house—a scoundrel of a French officer. It was shocking,—terrible. The day before the marriage, she was in one of these terrible fits. She had been insane for years! Oh, what I went through! Surely I deserve some peace and happiness now."

There was a long pause.

"And Lucy?" said West, hesitating.

"Hush!" said Vivian. "Not a word to her. The Dear Girl suspects and knows it all, I am convinced. But she wishes that

I should think she knows nothing, so it must be a mystery to the end."

"Dear Girl, indeed!" said West.

"Let us come in now—I am sure she has tea ready."

A brightly-lit room, yet of a softened effulgence, pretty furniture, mellow colours, makes a charming frame for Lucy—a *lady* now—and still Mrs. Vivian. But with her child's smile, and young voice, and engaging ways. A little girl—Gilbert's god-child—is beside her. The smile brightens as she looks up and sees Gilbert enter. He goes over and sits beside her. He looks younger by ten years than he did in the old colony days. His brow is clear—his eyes are brighter. He has a gaiety of manner now. He talks to her with confidence, and laughter, and a pleasant fancy. As he does so, the god-child "toddles over" to him. He smiles as he pats her head. Lucy smiles too. The old dream has gone. In its place has come

a reality—better than a thousand of “Queen Mab’s” visits.

Vivian is at the door—gay and happy. He is singing, softly—what song do we suppose?—

“The light of her eyes,
It mirrors the skies!”

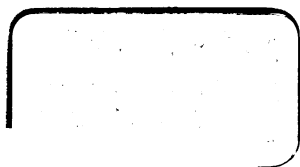
Lucy gives a delighted laugh, and claps her hands.

“Vivian, dear, you know Harco is coming down on Monday.”

She is still what she was and ever will be,
THE DEAR GIRL.

THE END.

22



The dinner was just over, and two gentlemen were sitting there, drinking their claret. It was a Saturday night.

“Now, I hope,” said the gentleman of the house, warmly, “that *this* is only to be a beginning; at *least*, every Saturday we shall look for you, so long as we are here. You can pack up the odious briefs, and be back by the coach on Tuesday. That is to be a fixed arrangement, is it not? My dear West, now that I know you and value you, there is no one I should wish to see so much of.”

“Business, dreadful business,” said the other, smiling, “which I have foolishly gone back to. I am afraid——”

“What, carrying out that poor priest’s ‘*laborare est orare*,’ as you told me. That is not the sense he meant it in. He would come back from his grave to reprove you. See what I have done, West; given up the dear army to please Lucy.

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